

Whistleblower Superfund '99

Written by Ronald Arthur Slater
Copyright 2005

I have been told that I must write some kind of disclaimer about my stories and the memories of so long ago. I suppose after several fist fights, black eyes, head and neck injuries, and after such a long period of life's pains and disappointments, my memories of childhood events might be slightly fogged of truth, self serving, and cultivated along with illness and medication, by the expected exaggerated tails of an old mans adventures of love, time, and place. But let there be no doubt in anyone's mind about the things I am about to tell you, of what truly happened in Seattle at Terminal 18 Harbor Island between the years 1999 and 2000. What I witnessed with my own eyes and events that took place on that job site, to my men, to me, to you, and to the river. Please believe with absolute certainty and conviction that these violations against all of us and the Environment, did occur, so help me God.

This is a true story about my life as a boy stuck between hunger, neglect and abuse. It's also about my career as an operating engineer, helicopter pilot and superintendent for heavy equipment and excavation. But mostly, this story is about screaming a warning so loud that all Americans everywhere, especially in Seattle, hear and heed the truth about hazardous waste Superfund sites and specifically Terminal 18, Harbor Island. It's also about becoming a "whistleblower" and the effects it may have on one's career, health, and income.

Three of my men almost died and more are sure to follow. What was buried underground and pumped into the river late at night on Terminal 18, Harbor Island during the years 1999 to 2000, was criminal. What will happen when all this contamination underground gets down to the beach and fish? It's clear to me, men, women and children will get sick and die and no one will know why, except you and me. I believe all Americans will want to read this story. Not only because they value our country, our air and our rivers and waters, but also because Americans, more than anything, value the truth. Only the names, locations and true identities of my family have been changed to protect their privacy and safety while I also added a slight addition of fiction to their existence and events.

Finally, this story is about healing. After losing my career and income for going to the E.P.A. and the Attorney General's office, after months of unemployment and severe stress, the title whistleblower had done its damage. No work, no pay and almost no more family. Half insane and full of rage, I set out to plan and execute an attack on the enemies of my past employment. This plan would have resulted in several deaths, including my own. I needed help and the Department of Veteran's Affairs would see to it that I got just that. So after five years of full retirement since being wrongfully terminated, I write this story of danger, fraud and deceit. I also write about severe abuse, violence and hunger and the United States Armed Forces ability to help men like myself, find safety, future careers and strength. If you love your country, if you could love my men as I did. You will read my story.

Ronald Arthur Slater
Copyright 2005

My Dear Seattle,

Can you here me? Are you listening? Please hear my words, for I come to you as one of your sons, screaming a warning and yelling as loud as I can. I'm standing here on the shoreline of the Duwamish River in the town of Seattle in Washington State. It's almost the end of March 2000 and I'm looking across the river at a large hill called West Seattle where I was born. I have just lost my job as the Excavation Superintendent on this hazardous waste Superfund site called Terminal 18, Harbor Island Seattle. I am about to make a decision that will affect me the rest of my life and I'm wondering how I got here and how this will affect my life and career.

I need to take you with me. Not down the street or across town. But far back in time almost sixty-two years ago, right up on that hill I'm now facing called West Seattle. But first I must answer the phone. Hello, Yes this is Ronald Slater. Mr. Slater this is the staff Urologist with the Department of Veterans Affairs here in Seattle. Yes Doctor, May I help you? Mr. Slater it is never easy to inform any patient of the possibly of a serious disease or life threatening ailment. But I must inform you now that you have been diagnosed with CANCER. You have very little time to make a decision that might save your life. Within seconds, a six-inch wide river of sweat and perspiration was running down my back, and my mind was running wild and completely terrified. I was at the beginning of death's door, but even then with the grim reaper standing by smiling, I knew I must continue to write fast and accurately and for now control my fear of terminal illness and my early death. I am in serious trouble and once again I know it.

As I stand beside the mouth of the Duwamish looking west I'm wondering, not only how I got here, but also what am I going to do. How did this ever happen to someone like me. Before we leave its mandatory I believe, that you must know my qualifications and ability's. Also my training, the outstanding men and leaders of the U.S Naval Seabee's, there chief petty officers, and the civilian construction leaders, and engineers that would lay the framework for my future and profession called Equipment Operator, Heavy Civil Construction I also want you to know everything that I have witnessed as your representative, and what I have been ordered to do or ignore on this Superfund site called Terminal 18, Harbor Island.

Back in 1960 I entered the US Armed Forces for the first time and served my first tour as an enlisted man in the US Navel Seabee's for four years. From 1960 to 1967 throughout the Caribbean and on the island of Bermuda, I would be trained on several pieces of Heavy Equipment, by the best of instructors, military and civilian, to be accountable and responsible for toxic waste incineration, base maintenances, equipment operation, and runway construction. Most of all the responsibility and assignment to handle and dispose of all hazardous toxic waste, along with the herbicides containing dioxin's and something we would soon learn to fear and refer to as Agent Orange, Agent Blue and Agent White.

I also was directed from, and ordered by, the U.S Government at Kindley Air Force Base Bermuda for over eighteen months, to dispose of, and provide for ocean burial of well over 200 barrels of 2/4/D, Agent Orange, Agent blue, Agent white, and Agent purple. Also all other toxic and medical waste including some radiation and the weekly incineration of the deadly stacks and piles of insulation called asbestos.

After returning home in 1967, I spent the next thirty-five years, along with flying helicopters and becoming a flight instructor, running just about every type of earth moving equipment made. By now, I have acquired over forty years of Heavy Civil Construction, working from the Mohave Desert, to the Caribbean Islands, to Prudhoe Bay and throughout Alaska and Washington State. I have also become a licensed contractor with my own heavy equipment, doing land development and working on numerous multi-million dollar projects, as well as supervising earth moving and utilities operations.

I have arrived at this time, place, and date, at the peak of all my skills and ability, with a smile on my face and determination in my heart, believing I was ready for any challenge or job site project, supported by all the teachers and leaders of my past, and there first class training, and instruction. I believe my work during this time reflected good management, speed, profit, and a visual daily reminder of my foundation of experience.

I was not ready however for the lies, deceit, and fraud, that would radiate throughout this Superfund Hazardous Waste site, Harbor Island, and the Seattle suburbs.

On October 1, 1999, after giving my future employer several letters of reference concerning my by skills, abilities and experience, I was hired as an Assistant Superintendent by the company then called Morrison-Knudson Company.

This project that I'm standing on today is called Terminal 18, Harbor Island and for over 15 years has been called and is considered a Superfund and an uncontrolled hazardous site by the Environmental Protection Agency. During my pre-job interview and subsequent hiring, the Project Manager informed me, that I was being hired to supervise the demolition of all roads, old Utilities and old buildings and assist in new Utilities installation, new road construction and the Environmental Remediation of all Hazardous toxic Waste above certain levels. This same manager also told me, that this project was highly contaminated and that I and my men and others on the job would receive the necessary training to clean up the entire site.

For over a month I had the job specs in my possession. I thoroughly studied from cover to cover, all the guidelines and directions of this job-site. Several things stood out, highlighted. Without exception, truck washes would be installed prior to any earth-moving operations. All personnel working on the ground or in the dirt would receive 40 hours of Hazardous Waste Training and as the Assistant Superintendent; I would receive 8 more hours of Supervisory training. We were also to receive several hours of training on lead awareness.

All work on this Superfund hazardous waste site and under this consent decree would be conducted and implemented with all adherences to any and all Federal and State government regulations (WHISA) and Part P of those regulations to this site. This project is highly contaminated with Lead, Arsenic, Cadmium, Chromium, Mercury, Zinc, Ammonia, PAH's and PCB's, etc, etc

These job-site specs, other directives and orders by the Port and the E.P.A were very clear, even to a high-school drop out like me. For the next five months it just didn't happen that way. Around November 1, 1999, I was deployed into the field of operations with several men and women under the direction of the Safety Officer and Project Superintendent. At this time I had not received any Hazardous Waste Training or Supervisor training, nor had my crew. At last, after several days in the field on the equipment and into the dirt, we started classes and training to safely and legally operate in this uncontrolled hazardous waste site. After graduation the very next week, I requested site soil testing so I could better prepare my crew and myself for adequate P.P.E. and for export of soils, sod and mud. The Project Superintendent informed me at that time, that Morrison-Knudson wouldn't be testing any site soil for any reason. Further, I was ordered to bury all suspect soils, fuels and hazardous substances. Morrison-Knudson would not be paying the price for the "Port of Seattle's past mistakes."

For the next five months I would witness the following examples of wrongful and illegal acts:

1. No testing of soil by Morrison-Knudson or the Port Of Seattle. (I was told later on that the Port of Seattle found pre-job bids on soil testing were too expensive.)
2. Illegal de-watering into the drains and catch basins and Duwamish River for over five months.
3. No hazardous waste training for numerous personnel requiring such training.
4. No pre-job blood test and the Safety Officer directed all blood test to be paid by the employee if there were no toxins found in blood.
5. No truck washes.
6. No lifejackets.
7. Nobody is to break Radio Silence on any fuel spills.
8. Several vehicles not licensed or inspected were deployed on to the city streets of Seattle.
9. When employees were injured or hurt, they were sent home with pay rather than allowing them to file a Labor & Industries claim or to submit a mandated blood test.
10. When men fell ill they were told that the project was not hazardous or toxic and that all contaminations had already been clean up.
11. We were told that all nosebleeds were caused by dust. Nobody but the Project Superintendent or Project Safety Officer was allowed to call 911.

I was ordered to smash and bury all newly discovered old fuel tanks. One of the worst orders I should ever receive in my entire career was this, "Don't bother to bring anything to the surface, contaminated or suspect soil. BURY EVERYTHING."

My boss, the project Superintendent, told me to do "what your told" for he was the only one there who had the right to replace me, and that was just the beginning. Starting in 1960 up to this time, one thing that was always stressed, ordered or directed, by my Master Chiefs, Sergeants or Officers of the military. Always, always, protect your men, your teammates, your diving buddy, your co-pilot and your crew. Also, the one thing that everyone, everywhere in construction knows--shut your mouth and do what you're told.

Unfortunately, this time it was me who was deploying these men after receiving my orders. This time it was me and several others that were bleeding from the nose and feeling ill with diarrhea. Some were passing out and some eventually going to the hospital and almost dieing. This time it was me who was witnessing along with the men and women I served with, the reckless deployment of my entire crew. Again and again, I was going into areas with high contaminations of lead and arsenic and several other toxins. Unbeknownst to us, the Port of Seattle and the E.P.A. had commissioned testing years before called the Weston Studies. The studies clearly showed the high levels of contamination, island wide throughout the entire project. We were working in street cloths in the same areas as the Weston Studies clearly defined as having very high levels of contaminants and to be highly dangerous. We were being told; all of us that it was all cleaned up and the nose bleeds were just caused by the dust.

On January 2000 and March 2000 after several fuel spills and injuries, I broke radio silence to seek help and called 911. The Project Manager and the Project Safety Officer immediately treated me with hostility, anger and coldness. Further, after the soil tests were taken and tested only for lead at the area called C.E.M, we were told the results showed 51 P.P.M. parts per million. Only one part too high, no big deal.

Several months later I would read and see the true results of those test and the level of deceit and lies of Morrison-Knudson Construction. We would also find very high levels of toxic soils and fuels throughout the project that we inhaled, swallowed and absorbed that could potentially shorten our lives or kill us. Never did I receive a copy of the Weston Studies nor was I ever told of their existence. Each and every day I was told, "It's all cleaned up! You have nothing to worry about." But I did.

The Environmental Protection Agency, the Washington State Dept of Ecology and the Port of Seattle, the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries and the Attorney General's office have confirmed everything that I have written about Terminal 18. But I believe you must have considerably more information. You must see and hear more, you must know more about me, my history and my long held secrets and finally what is truly happening and what is coming on this Superfund site called Terminal 18 Harbor Island.

Looking back now in time and I believe in order to save my soul and sanity, you should know everything. I'm certain in order for you to believe my words as truth, you must now go with me, back in time. Please I beg you. Come. Thank you.

Everyone has a significant period in their life where their character and direction of manhood receives such a clear message that life's long journey could be forever changed. Almost at once as I start writing, the faces and events of my childhood return to haunt me once again.

I remember very clearly the day I was born, March 14 1943. I took my first breath in Maynard Hospital, Seattle Washington with my mother and father looking down on me and arguing over my full name. After an hour of keeping me awake and deprived of all that food, it was decided by my father I would be called Ronald Arthur Slater. I would receive the middle name of his uncle that he greatly admired.

My mother on the other hand came from a long, long line of heritage and history with the last name of Bradstreet and wanted my middle name to reflect her past and breeding. Humphrey Bradstreet came from England in the early 1600 and landed on the shore of Massachusetts and helped create the town of Ipswich Mass, Essex County. Going back over fourteen generations and four centuries past, there have been Bradstreet's living, working and defending American soil, always. On this very day the Bradstreet farm is still held and worked by the Bradstreet family. This land that was given to Humphrey Bradstreet by a King's grant is considered the oldest farm still being worked, by the same family, in the United States of America. My ancestors on my mother's side would fight in every war from the Revolution, Civil, WWII, Korea and Vietnam. I have always been an American in spirit and fight, but sometimes it would become very painful. Right then, I was fighting for all the attention and food my mother and the nurses could produce. By the time a bottle or breast would be delivered, I was in a complete rage of hunger and tears, believing I was completely deserted. The long, lonely hours of lying in that crib and having to take endless naps, was driving me crazy. I was ready to get up and hit the deck running. Kiss all the girls, and get involved.

Unfortunately for me, the head nurse wrapped my legs and body very tightly in a blanket, so travel was out of the question. All I could do was relax, stare and daydream of future feedings. It was during this time I started to become aware of things and sounds around me. Glancing out from my crib I noticed my fellow roommates all were wrapped and bundled up the same as I, and not showing me the slightest bit of concern or attention. I also notice when they screamed or cried their voices and volume was considerably lower and softer. On several occasions the nurses would lay every newborn out on the same long table for photos and social contact. One morning I found myself awoken by movement, sound and fragrance. By chance the head nurse had laid me between six other roommates to scream, cry and laugh at each other. On the second day of my life I would realize they looked better, smelled better and always liked my company. Later on in life I would be told they would be called girls, women and ladies.

Being the only boy born that week, I quickly became the talk and attention of every girl in my row and would go out of my way to impress my six roommates with loud outburst and courage's arm flinging. Each and every girl in that row would eventually open their eyes, cast a smile and have me playfully silly and devoted to them for the rest of the day. Before the week was through, I'm sure I knew all their names and made every effort to impress upon them my future status as crib companions and nursery school playmates. I would forever seek women out during my life, for recognition, attention, love and affection and their unmistakable fragrance. After several days of endless pleasure, two girls were removed from both sides of my shoulders and new crib companions were laid beside me. Immediately, I started my routine of yelling, gasping and dangerous arm tossing, to impress upon their eyes this standout newborn. Staring into their eyes, I would quickly discover indifference, friction and a coldness that only a seasoned crib companion could detect. The two new arrivals I would observe, not only looked different, but acted and behaved differently as well. Their smell and fragrance would destroy many good meals I had planned and the constant fling of their arms on both my sides, was giving me second thoughts about my future playmates.

One day just before I warmed myself with my newly heated diaper, the nurse removed the plastic lining and soiled linen before I had delivered any heat or liquid. No sooner then she stood back, my desire for relieve and heat would be called upon with great strength and volume, forming an arch over my head and delivering a strong yellow wet message to the faces of my now disgruntled competitors. On the first week of my life, I had made my first enemy. Later on in life, I would be told they would be called boys, men and friends. I would constantly seek them out for all the adventures, protection, fun and pleasure that childhood friends could produce.

About the time that I realized I was no longer the center of attention, I was removed by my mother and carried to my new home. No longer would I have all the focus and care of the nurses and the company and laughter of my new friends. My new bed was a cage of wooden bars that surrounded me where- ever I crawled. For days, weeks and months I would be left to play, sleep, eat and grow with endless hours of absolute boredom and loneliness. My animated friends staring back at me from the sides of my new home would sometimes make me laugh but never spoke out loud or offered anything new to stimulate my day. The ones right above me hanging just out of my reach, would twirl and bounce all during the day but again, offered no relief from my isolation and constant hunger.

Slowly but steady I began to grow big enough and strong enough to finally climb the rails of my imprisonment and completely destroy the hanging, bouncing, teasing, boring friends that hung above my face for so long. Now I would take long trips from one end of my home to the other, going all the way down the wooden rails for challenge and adventure, seeking out anything new or different, but always returning just in time for food and drink. In my entire six months of life I was never late for a meal or attention and always aware of my surroundings, environment and care. It was during this time that I had learned to stand up, on top of my crib and allow flight to take place, with me finally reaching the mattress after several bounces. My laughter could be heard forever.

Each day I had a destination, a direction, a new ability, that sent me on my way to endless walls and future hideouts. Finally after serious planning, several failed attempts and several falls, I was up, over and down and my life would change forever. I hit the floor running, only to find the wall that my mother walked through each hour, for my care, would not move or deliver any daylight, like the window next to my crib. Still confined, I did find a whole new play area throughout the room and under every standing form. Finally, after the several dangerous and serious miles of my travels, I had arrived deep underneath my two roommates sleeping area, where I realized it was time for my nap. Cocooned and protected, I entered a somber and restful sleep that only an infant of my travels and adventures could find. Were it not for feeding time and the loud screaming and yelling appearing above me, I would have stayed there very long and often.

All the faces that I had come to recognize as my family were now in my large play area yelling, screaming and crying just like my old nursery friends and calling out my name very loudly. I felt very excited to be the focus of all this attention and warmth as I proceeded to hike my way out to the daylight. That was the first mistake I ever made. It would not be my last. My mother at first, after not seeing me in my confined bed and

looking at the window slightly opened, instantly believed at first glance that her newborn had been taken out through the window and was gone forever. She was shocked and pleasantly surprised, as she marveled at my early strength and ability. The one person, standing beside her, who always brought me up higher and higher almost to touch the ceiling, was not as understanding or as warm as she was, concerning my absence. If I was strong enough to run around, he believed I was strong enough to be disciplined. So for the first time in my life I would feel the pain and repercussions of my actions. With a cry heard around the world, my leg would sting from the heavy hand of an alcoholic father and a man that I grew to love and fear for a long, long time.

Eventually, after long planning and thought, I would find the freedom of escape from my confinement, to travel, challenge and experience all this room could offer. Finally on one bright day, the wall where my mother would appear each hour for feeding or attention, would open and allow me the freedom to pursue all life's adventures through out our home. I would share some of my days with my two sisters, as we attempted to self-entertain each other during the long days of parental absence. As time went by, we would cover every inch of the house and basement and soon found ourselves through out the yard and neighborhood, seeking new friends and attention from anyone and everyone who would listen or support our loneliness and isolation

One day, I remember very clearly the smell of Halloween and apples coming from the basement of our next-door friend. Believing he wouldn't mind, I discretely crawled through the window and proceeded to explore and forage for food. It would not be the last time. About the time I was trying to escape with a handful of apples and food, the father of my friend had his hand around my neck stopping my exit. As he slowly escorted me home, without the fruits of my labor, I was struck two, maybe three times as I climbed out of their basement and back door. He had no way of knowing, he had just made his closest and worse enemy.

Sitting at home that same day hungry, humiliated and beaten, I decided for the first time in my life there would be a reckoning, I would fight back. And it would not be the last time. That evening out through my bedroom window I hung, finally dropping to the grass below. The white picket fence that I would climb was sharp and awkward leaving just enough space for my feet on top, to spring over just like my crib and hit the grass running. Working my way over to the back of the house in the dark, I soon found the garden hose and sprinklers of summers gone by and preceded to unscrew the hose for more volume. Slowly I opened the bedroom glass and slid the line underneath the window. As I made my exit over the white picket fence, I would feel a great sense of satisfaction in knowing I had fought back and smiled as I slowly turned on my neighbor's new facet.

Within two hours I would find out what an absolute lady my mother was and what a coward and bully my friends father was. After the loud screaming stopped from my neighbor, my mother politely and gently explained the absence and void of the man who lifted me to the ceiling so many times and so long ago. She also said something to him I have never forgotten. Couldn't you have just let him have the apple? He was just very hungry. In time they would be paid for the water damage, by someone unknown. And my mother let him know; don't ever touch my son again. I went to my room, without be told,

after returning the butcher knife to the kitchen drawer. But I realized on that night something was very wrong as I heard my mother weeping into her pillow. I had no way of knowing that all of us in this house were in very serious trouble.

It was now December 1948 and each day I was required to walk the one-mile to High Point Elementary School. All week, while walking with my sisters, the weather had become very cold. No longer did we stop and play in the many frozen muds puddles or carry ice to and from school as a novelty. We quickly ran to school and back realizing the cold, at times, could become a bitter enemy. More than half my first grade class now sitting around me carried or had developed one disease or another. Some with ringworms, some with severe colds, some in wheel chairs for several reasons and some that already left class to occupy the hospital wards fighting a disease called Polio. I also was acutely aware that some of my classmates had more food, cloths and the loving care of parents who each and every day, delivered their children to and from school by automobile. I was green with envy. The one thing we all had in common was the blackening effect of tooth decay. Almost every child in class and through out school, had a mouth full of darkened cavities that made each one appear hungry, desperate and poor. Only two things would give me sincere pleasure at school this day. One was recess on the playfield, even in the cold; the other was three-foot tall, with blond hair, two courageous blue eyes and rotten teeth. And she was beautiful. Each and every day I would do everything in my power to leap, run and play to show her I was the fastest, strongest and most handsome classmate there. I had even convinced her that it was I, who was smiling and winking, shoulder to shoulder with her so long ago at Maynard Hospital on the same week we were born.

Just before lunch, the teacher informed all of us that school would be closed, because the weather was getting much worse and the cold was becoming severe. It had been snowing all morning but now the wind and heavy snowfall had everyone concerned or scared for our safety. Normally snow gave me tremendous pleasure and joy and I would play in it for hours only returning home after my feet became too frozen to walk. But this storm or blizzard as they called it was viciously cold, with two-foot snowdrifts already forming on sidewalks and roads around us. The automobiles that I greatly admired were spinning, stuck and helpless, as they piled up by the dozens.

My concern for walking home in this weather was overshadowed by my promise to walk the love of my life, two blocks deeper into the High Point Projects. The desire to aggressively run home with my sisters, save myself from the cold and forget all promises was great. But even then, at this young age, I knew that if anyone could do this, it would be me, for I was absolutely and completely in love. Our journey for almost three blocks with the wind to our backs was completely absent of all conversation. Her face was wrapped with her winter scarf leaving only her courageous blue eyes exposed. I on the other hand, had only earmuffs with a metal strap over my head and no hat. My winter coat gave me protection as she hung on my arm. I would become very sorry later on, that I had no gloves. Slowly and with pain, I forged forward through the drifts of snow and the many school bicycles already abandoned along the way. Finally, already feeling the effects of severe chill we arrived at her door. Without a word being said I immediately turned and started my long journey home. The wind was now in my face and delivered a stinging, punishing message. I was in trouble and I knew it.

Finally reaching the school, I was greatly tempted to try and get back in, but realized everyone was gone. I now had one more mile to go with snowdrifts of three feet and more and I was becoming very sleepy. I also had not eaten since the night before and school lunch was cancelled, leaving me drained of all energy and body heat. Food in our home had become very scarce, so had clothing and so had my father. The dripping from my nose and eyes had now frozen, leaving me able only to breath through my mouth while covering my eyes with my hands as I walked. My uncovered head brought on a severe headache that brought my shoulders closer and closer, down towards the sidewalk. My hands delivered a stinging pain that made the temptation great to butt both hands in a pocket and sit for a while and rest. The minute my hands left my face, my eyes would burn and fog up so badly that I was unable to put one leg ahead of the other or to find any path or foot hole in the snow of past walkers.

Finally, the years of running, sprinting, climbing and fighting would deliver their value. With my home in site one block away, I realized that if I didn't run now, I would not be able to make it. With every muscle, aggression and the sprit of all the school recesses I would ever attended, I threw both legs forward, hard and high enough to leap over and through every four foot drift. At last, at the base of the rockery and sidewalk up to our front door, I had to crawl hand over leg, hand over leg, through powder drifts that gave no direction or favor. At last my hands hit the front door, so cold that I felt nothing but numbness up my arms, as I completely collapsed at the base of the front porch. When the door opened I was greeted with anger and screams as I tracked snow and ice throughout the house and across the living room floor. I couldn't help but think to myself, as I as I slid beneath the steam and hot water of the greatest bath I would ever feel, "If they only knew."

I would find out much later in life, the winters of 1948, 1949, and 1950 were the worst and most severe on record. Thirteen people would die that day and some just down the street, underneath piles of snow and ice, lying beside their bicycle or the schoolbooks they refused to leave. Each and every winter for the rest of my life, I would remember this day and remind myself, I had beaten death and I would never forget it. I also would never forget the blond hair and blue eyes of the most beautiful seven year old whose hand I held in the winter of '49.

I always loved the flowers that grew along our street, when the air became soft and moist and the sun would deliver its warmth and light for long periods of the day. The tulips, daffodils, roses and rhododendrons occupied everyone's front yard along 36th Street of West Seattle that I called home. It was now spring of 1949 and finally the days of wind, rain, snow and cold were over. Except for the light showers of rain it was about to become the perfect day. Across the street from our home on the entire lower hill, no homes had been built yet leaving a huge forest area full of trees so big that the clouds in the winter storms would wrap around their branches to hang on for long periods of time. I would discovered early on this area would provide me with endless hours of pleasure and entertainment, as I crept beneath the branches and found the smallest and most discrete of trails taking me deeper and deeper into the forest. The varieties of trees were endless, with Douglas Firs, Cedars and Hemlocks lining the hill. Deep inside, down on the forest floor, the trees of centuries gone by had delivered their quills, moss and soft bark to create a cushioned bedding that made being barefoot the walk of the day. Each and every tree would provide me with adventure and challenge, as I explored and climbed as many as I could, without getting to the top or falling to the floor of cushion and green.

One particular and exclusive tree stood out from all the rest, as if it just didn't belong. Somehow the height and branches of the tallest of trees had failed to prevent the seeds of flight to fall between them, giving this tree the one opportunity to land, settle in and become the unique, spectacular tree she was. With branches thick and wide and green leaves all around, she provided me with protection, from the showers of spring, the loneliness of home and the hunger and desertion of a little boy. They were called Madronas and this one was spectacular. Her branches and limbs not only grew out thick and wide, they grew out low, to give me every easy access for quick and easy flight to and from the heights of her exclusive reach. This forest and this tree would provide me with many, many hours of entertainment and friendship.

My father had been gone for several years now and my mother and sisters and I had been paying a very heavy price for his absence. Were it not for the fact that he sent no money or food for a long period of time, my sisters and I could have been reasonably happy. His long absence, bad temper and heavy drinking had destroyed our home and broken all our hearts forever. Each and every day, our mother would catch the bus for work and we would be left to fend and protect ourselves during her absence. We had just come through a winter so cold and hungry that at one point each and every one of us with barely a thing to eat would have found our way down the basement stairs to pry open a very old can of oily salmon and try to swallow without throwing up. For the longest period of time we had been very hungry and neglected. Never, do I ever recall saying or yelling out, "Hey Dad, hey Mom, watch me run, watch me swim, watch me play." They just were not there. Our physical and dental health was in serious decay as I found myself more and more foraging for food and attention.

During one of my walks through the back alley gardens and fruit trees that hadn't yet grown, I was surprised to encounter a girl my own age, picking the flowers I had so greatly admired all along the road. After I informed her that this was not allowed, she slowly convinced me that the tulips, daffodils, roses and rhododendrons were there for every one to pick and enjoy. With the face and voice of an angel, I became an instant

believer and picked as many assorted flowers as I could carry for deposit to my new home, far in the woods. On this summer day, I fell madly and deeply in love. Instantly, I shared my deepest and most privately kept secrets with her. Secrets of hidden paths, beneath the branches, that carried you deep into the arms of my favorite Madronas. With instant trust and comfort, she followed me all the way down, deep into the green, to finally arrive and be embraced by the branches of this enormous tree and forest.

For days and weeks we would surround ourselves with the colors of spring. All the various flowers that were cut early in the morning and late at night, by the two quiet leprechauns of the neighborhood, were replanted or arranged all around the base of our home called Madronas. The aroma and fragrance were beyond description as we savored the sweetness of the air and the offspring of all color around us. Throughout the streets and alleys with a rusted red wagon, we would scrounge, beg, borrow, or steal any and all lumber or cardboard, to construct our tree house in the sky. At last with a floor to stand and a roof to fend off the summer heat and showers, it was done. With the wide, soft, green ferns as our beds, wild chestnuts and pinecones for our meals and mushrooms as big as dinner plates for dessert, we were the masters of all we could see, of all we could touch. We were truly in heaven.

One day as we admired all that we owned and all that we could see beyond or below, we looked at each other straight in the eye, I notices the dark blue marks and circles on her legs and arms that only beatings would produce. Her face and hair were always clean and fresh each and everyday we met. No other child in the entire area or street we lived on had such beautiful teeth or mouth. Without a word being said, as though she read my mind, she softly brushed her lips past my cheek and delivered the first kiss for this ten-year-old boy. On this summer day with the apples and cherries growing all around us and the summer sun baking our backs and bodies, I was allowed to enter her private world of affection and touch. I had been kissed for the first time in my life with affection, something I would never forget and always treasure.

It was during this time that I was given ten cents apiece for my sisters and me to attend the Saturday movies, four miles away at the Granada Theater in West Seattle. For six hours each and every Saturday, we would be deposited at the movie entrance, half fed with no other money we would spend the entire day riding the range for cattle, chasing the rustlers and shooting all the Indians, that the west would hold. All the children of the area bravely appeared each and every Saturday, with their western shirts, cowboy boots and six-shooter cap pistols to quickly shoot and kill every rustler, crook or Indian. This was amazing shooting since all the smoke and fog from hundreds of caps going off at times completely blinded the movie screen.

But no matter what, however the weather, children my own age every Saturday would flood the seats and balcony throughout the theater. All the heroes and good guys wore white hats and rode golden and silver horses. There's Roy Rogers with Trigger. Gene Autry and Champ. And the mask man called the Lone Ranger, riding Silver his horse, with Tonto and scout by his side. Every one of them displayed courage, bravery and honor and always shot straight and true. With there silver bullets and six-shooters they gave me all the protection and guidance a lonely ten-year-old boy could use and I loved them forever with all my dreams and heart. After the six long hungry hours of

movies would pass, my sisters and I would be required to walk almost four miles, up each and every hill to finally reach our home. To this very day, we shall never forget the blistering heat or terrible thirst that we encountered on those four long miles going up hill. The leather chaps that I wore around my legs, just like the movie cowboys had on as they chased cattle and rode the range, were particularly difficult to keep on. But if they could do it, then so could a skinny little cowboy, without a six-shooter or holster, as I climbed each and every hill. Finally, exhausted and beat, we would arrive home completely spent and miraculously untouched.

The very next morning on Sunday, I would get up early and head quickly down the street to the forest and trees, under the branches and deep into the heaven of green. I would always whistle loudly, so she wouldn't be surprised or scared. All the fruits and vegetables of our early and daily labor were there. Old cherries, apples and pears, string beans and carrots, from all the gardens and alleys everywhere. But on this last day of summer when I needed my special friend the most, she was not there. She was not anywhere.

For days, up and down the streets I looked everywhere, for any signs of her soft voice or auburn red hair. I returned several times to the woods thinking today she will be there and everything will be good and happy again. But she never would return, as the hard rains of fall and cold winds made the trip down into the forest very unpleasant and sometimes even for a seven year old child who rode the range for cattle, cowboys and Indians, very scary. Finally after many trips walking past her home, I stopped and called out to her mother, smiling and asking for my friend. The look of rage and hate was instant as she charged right at me, out the gated fence while throwing handfuls of dirt and screaming very loudly, get out, get out and don't ever come back, don't ever come back. My fear on that day for that woman was beyond description, as I bolted down the sidewalk over the hill and into my home, fearful even then that she would somehow find me and beat me so badly that I would be covered from my head to my legs with the same bruises as my lost summer friend.

In time everyone in the neighborhood and school, all except me, would know her whereabouts and fate. At last, I would be told by my mother that the little girl on 35th with the name of Stephanie had died of something they called Leukemia. She was buried just down the street from my daily school. I had learned by now that crying for food or pain for any reason was a very unacceptable and unmanly behavior and was a strong sign of weakness. For days and then weeks, I would keep her in my mind and heart and hold any signs of tears and grief deep inside and away from anyone's sight.

On each and every day as I passed their home on my way to school, I would cross over the street to the other side, fearful at any minute that the woman with such rage, anger and hate, would appear and beat me to death, for kissing this girl of summer's gone by. But on one day with out even thinking, I failed to cross over the other side and found myself walking directly beside her home. With a scream that could have only come from a mother who had lost her child forever, she yelled out my name several times as she ran aggressively at me with tears running down her face. Throwing my arms close to my head, I tried to protect myself as I waited for the slaps and blows I believed would be coming. Suddenly this woman who towered above me and completely blocked the

morning sun, wrapped her arms around me. As my head disappeared in between her breasts, my words and tears were instant; I tried to explain my previous ignorance of her child's death and my own childhood pain of the reality of death and the loss of my friend forever. For the longest period of time she held me in her arms as I cried not only for me, but for the many trees, flowers and birds, around the giant Madronas, that would never see the likes of her beautiful face again in the summer of green of '49.

During this time, no one had bothered to look west and south, down towards the town of Tacoma, to a massive smelter and smoke stack called Asarco. They would also have not known, of the massive amounts of arsenic, lead and other hazardous wastes that had been dispensed from this huge facility throughout the Seattle shoreline and Puget Sound area, both in the air and underground, for several decades. Also, nobody had bothered to look three miles north and slightly to the east, just over the hill from our home, to another huge smelter facility called Bethlehem Steel. If these massive factories of emissions and death were not enough, a person could always look right across the street from Bethlehem Steel. On Spokane Way, "from Alki Drive East to the Duwamish River" they'd see something they would call Harbor Island. Many years later, Harbor Island would play a significant and defining part of my life, carrier, income and sanity. These three defining manufacturing sites and bodies of land would decades later be referred to with the distinct title of "Superfund" hazards waste sites. Nobody would have known at the time of our childhood, that all around us as we ran, biked and played throughout the streets of West Seattle and the forest of green, that the trees, dirt, sand, beach and ferns of bedding in a childhood tree house, were covered with emissions of arsenic, lead and sulphur and other deadly contaminants. It would be several years before the doctors, scientists and the EPA, confirmed the relationship between the emissions of hazards waste-lead, arsenic, sulphur, etc to several types of very serious illnesses, diseases and death.

This body of land called Harbor Island that fronted Puget Sound from the south, along Spokane Way was considered one of the highest contaminated future cleanup sites in the United States of America. While studying many years later, I came across a chapter of medical reports and history of known diseases from prolonged exposures. Scanning down the list, I came across something that they would again call, "Leukemia." For the first time in a long time, that word would bring forth her face and the memory of Stephanie and a promise I hadn't even made yet, to prevent this from ever happening again. It will be cleaned up, all of it and be taken far, far away, so the children and everyone everywhere swimming around the corner at Alki Beach and from where I sat would never see the bruises all over their arms and little legs and hear the words Leukemia or cancer.

But I was only a child then and what did I know. Finally after years of struggle and pain and poverty my mother decided she had had enough. At last after several attempts, our home was sold for half of the market value but it gave her and her children a chance for a new and hopefully better life. She selected a home in South Seattle on an unpaved road minutes away from a huge wheat field of rolling hills and discrete wooded areas of towering Douglas fir trees.

The entire wooded area, which encompassed over 500 acres, sloped downward, towards the north to one defined area creating two separate lakes, one big and one small. The shore lines were bare all around, except further north into the deep woods, giving every blade of grass and water lily pad a chance to daily embrace the sun and almost smile. High up on her banks and shoulders, would grow the towering and cooling trees we would call the Lombardi. These trees would provide shade and comfort to all that would visit or stay and inform anyone on a daily basis of the changes of weather, sun or season. Although they had very small branches, these trees that could grow over 60 feet tall and were never, if ever, climbed. Their numbers and their size had formed a huge circular area that encompassed my boyhood treasures and lake of adventure.

Many years ago this area had been the site for a future golf course, with all the trees and hills of grass far beyond your sight, but now completely overgrown with time and wheat grass. At the turn of the century the whole area was called Garrett Golf course. The two ponds before me, big and small, would give me not only the birthplace of my swimming, endurance and strength, but also the beauty of women and the horror of death. She would always be called Hicks Lake. Except for the shoreline of sand where we swam deep below, the lake was covered with a century worth of fallen leaves and eroding soil, giving the bottom a deep layer of mossy dangerous mud. If a swimmer should make the mistake of standing on her bottom, he would find very quickly the suction and imprisonment that many times had delivered a swimmer to a dark and muddy grave. All the children and adults who regularly swam on her shore line knew the pleasure of these ponds, but also the danger of deep water and not being able to swim out. Except, of course, the few who just would not listen.

It was now summer of 1951 and my whole life had changed once again. The move to this area called White Center was far and away from everything of life I had ever known. Trying to make new friends, new schools and new fistfights were taking their toll. The loneliness for my old childhood friends all the way over in West Seattle, was great. So great and so longing that with all my wisdom and youth and a dilapidated Schwinn bike, I set out to cover the thirty some miles, through White Center, over Roxbury and down to High Point, to find my home, my friends and her memory. After endless hours and miles of pedaling, I arrived at my old home. With the new children in the yard and someone mowing the grass, I quickly realized I was a complete stranger. I also realized by the standoff attitude of the kids around me that I had played with for so many years, that I was gone forever. Going past the forest of my childhood, loggers and heavy equipment had completely cleared all the trees of adventure for new homes and new children.

After riding up to the next street, I was now on 35th heading south for the long ride home. Four houses up I knew I had one last thing to do, as I softly knocked on Stephanie's door. As the door slowly opened my desire to run was just as great as the last time we met, but again this women with hands like leather gloves and a presence and size that engulfed the front door frame, would have my legs hanging helplessly, as her arms surrounded my body and my head disappeared deep into her breast. Without leaving the front porch, I proceeded to tell her everything that I had been going through, since the loss of her daughter well over a year now. After relating all that was in my mind and heart, I started to walk towards my bike lying on the grass. As she gently held my arm

and whispered, "I'm so very glad my little girl had been kissed by you and I know more than once," she kissed me on the cheeks and face and sent me on my way by bicycle, up 35th heading for my new home. I arrived home late in the afternoon totally exhausted and spent. But I would never again believe that I needed to return to those streets or alleys or the forest that were now forever gone. You can never go back home again.

Just as I entered the yard, I was shocked and briefly excited to see the father of our home who had been gone for so long. My mother's move to a whole new area, had given her the chance for a better life, a better job and a new car she absolutely loved. The money from the sale of our last home paid for a shiny Oldsmobile '88 and provided a down payment for our new house. With no grass in the front-yard or back, our sometime father set out to rake every rock, level the soil and plant the seeds of grass. In no time at all we had green grass and flowers and for the first time in a long time, by his hand, food in the cabinets and finally eggs, milk and bread.

Our summer days were spent laying by the lake fishing for the wide variety of perch, bass and trout. The daily flights of ducks and geese landing on the lake gave all of us tremendous pleasure. The three daily meals had become a sincere pleasure as well, as I finally started to gain some weight. After being alone for so many years, my sisters and I still fell right in line, like our father had never left. My mother and dad would go out for the evening and socialize with the neighbors to give the appearance to everyone that their marriage and home were safe and very secure. But there was never a time for my sisters or me, when we felt safe from his temper or safe from the bottles of whiskey that changed him within minutes of drinking. His violence and abuse of our mother and us had left scars and memories that would always have us scared, intimidated and cowering in the back seat of the car from the slightest mistake. Like all things that are good, nothing lasts forever. And so it was, late in the summer that my mother decided she had seen enough abuse and heard enough lies that she finally told him to leave and never come back. With the same surprise I received with his arrival, I stood with complete despair and loss as I realized he was gone. But this time I was bigger and harder and older and I quickly realized, yes I was again alone, but I was also with new friends, fishing gear, a lake full of girls and trout. And I was FREE.

Through out the year and every other year to follow, I played baseball in the summer, football in the fall and basketball in the winter. Between fishing for girls on the lake and playing Little League Baseball on the fields, I was in childhood heaven. I was a fair pitcher, a poor hitter, but could catch anything and I loved the game. My daily and constant friends for fun or trouble were Billy and Stan. Billy had a fastball that could tear your head off and a right fist that could hit as hard as a grown man.

When we weren't fighting each other, he would protect me forever and many times did just that. Stan was very short in height, but had the guts and heart of a lion. He was also one of the finest catchers I would ever see. When we weren't fighting each other, all three of us would play, run, fish, swim, frolic or fight. I would never have friends like them again. Of all the games I would ever play in Little League baseball, only one stands out in my memory of almost 50 years ago.

After leaving Billy's home and walking north heading for the White Center field house, we passed the home of a new girl who had just moved into the neighborhood. And she was a beauty. As she stood there watering the front yard, Stan, Billy and myself all wearing our bright baseball uniforms, were doing everything in our power to impress upon her our high status as so-called top players and future baseball Hall of Famers. Her stepfather was standing beside his car in the driveway as he broke out laughing at our bragging and boasting of top baseball plays and bigger ones yet to follow. All they had to do was come to the big game a mile away and they could witness for themselves these standout athletes and love struck losers, for we hadn't won a game all year. All the way to the baseball diamond as we walked in the morning sun in our wool uniforms, I had my mind on hitting, pitching and necking. As the sweat ran off my head like the garden hose she held, I knew I had to cast her out of my mind and focus on performing and possibly winning this last game of the season. For several innings I was playing center field and did manage to deliver a flying catch to the applause and praise of many fans in the bleachers and my teammates. I even managed to get a base hit. There was never anyone there from my own family, never.

At the top of the ninth inning I was called in to relief pitch after the other team almost tied the score. Standing on the pitchers mound close to the bleacher and spectators, I became aware of waving and cheering by some of the fans behind "Stan the Man" my catcher and the fence that surrounded us. It was she in bright white peddle-pushers and glorious figure, with her family all beside her. Silently they were all saying to me, "OK kid lets see what you got." Within three minutes I had somehow managed to get two players out and within three minutes more I had almost filled the bases and was about to loose with absolute embarrassment and humiliation. But my last pitch never crossed the plate and never got hit. There was no curve ball; there was no change up, or fastball. But it was victorious. Holding the ball deep inside my mitt for concealment, I notice the runner on first had his head down, looking at his feet. With his temporary loss of concentration and distraction, I turned and yelled out to the first basemen, "Get the ball! Get the ball!" as if I had thrown it his way and he had missed the catch. The runner on first with his head now up, was caught off-guard, instantly believing I had overthrown the ball to first, as he bolted to second. As he arrived to second base now without the smirk on his face he had displayed at home plate, Billy my friend with the ball now in his hands, delivered by me, tagged him out. We had won, not with ability, or skill or three strikes you're out, but with brains. My friends would never fail me. During that summer I had bragging rights and was never shy about telling this big baseball story and win. A few years later this same girl who was cheering us on in the bleachers, by her presence and beauty, would again save me from childhood abandonment, from the horrors of the deep, of Hicks Lake and me.

My other friends were a few years older. My sisters had grown up with our mother's beauty, so every guy through out the town of White Center had heard of the Slater sisters. They all came around with their cars, money and trouble. The first thing they did was flatter the brother and protect him.

My older friends were Tommy, Spencer and Pete and sometimes Warren. For over three years I would look to them for all levels of guidance and maturity and all levels of theft and violence. These guys were tough, through and through. And they knew

it. My daily lessons of self defense and sometime beatings, along with brotherly care and food, would prepare me for all that life would ever challenge. The training that I would receive, on stealing automobiles, home burglary and personal theft, would still today amaze me. My ability, luck and the preservation of my life can never be denied. My sadness and regrets of this bad behavior so long ago can never be denied either. I was then 12 years old, skinny, hard and fast. I also had become a thief, liar and fighter. I had become a parents and neighbors worst nightmare.

It was now winter of 1954-55 and it seemed as though it had been raining forever. All the surrounding hills and roads had been draining west and north, finally arriving at the bottom of Hicks Lake, enlarging the lake to twice its size. The sandy shoreline on all sides, all the way up to the Lombardy's, was now covered with very deep water. With ice slowly growing from the edge of the trees to the water and the air thick with a freezing fog, I decided the wooden raft I had used all summer called the USS SLATER, should stay tied to the shoreline as I decided to seek the warmth of my new friends and there homes, or maybe just head up the hill to my own.

Walking up the hill between 10th and 11th Streets, I glanced back over my shoulder to once again stare on the lake and my personal battleship. My anger and temper were instant as I started back down the hill to confront the thief of my ship. I watched him on "My Lake" as he launched the finest raft on the water with the summer sign still nailed on it reading USS SLATER. My fearless temper was quickly suppressed as I recognized the pirate of the lake, who was older, bigger and maybe tougher than I was. He lived just down the street. He was never friendly and never played sports or swam and his name was Danny. Pretending I didn't see or care about this water logged piece of driftwood, I turned and started my long walk back up the hill, furious and defeated. A few weeks later, Danny, was strongly suspected of having family troubles and left home forever. For over a month as Tom, Warren, Spencer, Pete and myself and others, ice-skated or played on the ice, the father of Danny would wander the roads and the shoreline of Hicks Lake, looking for the love of his life, his little boy. Even then, I could recognize a broken heart, but he was gone forever.

After several weeks of freezing cold, the winds of change finally melted all the ice and the dark skies of rain returned. Tom, Spencer and Warren were walking the northern shoreline without a care in the world; they glanced at a log in the water and argued over shoe shines and girls and how a bloated log could have grown hair. Never had three young men ever run so fast or been so scared. They bolted up the hill, screaming and yelling and trying not to weep. Danny had been found. Somehow on someone's raft called the USS Something, he had been out on the lake on his own, with no one around for miles and had never learned how to swim. With heavy winter clothing on, Danny had been pulled deep down into the darkest part of the lake. His body had been hidden in the blackest mud for weeks. With everyone above him on the ice playing winter games, he had died right beneath our feet. His name was Danny Kleeboe and my friends and I would remember him forever.

Spring arrived and then summer, but I was older and much wiser now and I refused to ever swim, fish or play on that lake again. I recognized a long time ago, in the cold of a blizzard, that death was very final. There was no pleading, begging or getting a

second chance. It was done. You were no longer here. So I decided I needed to look for new friends with other hobbies and different morals. I was determined that for the rest of my life I would be the most polite, courteous law abiding citizen that God could have ever wanted. My many late night prayers in the dark basement of our home had promised full allegiance, trust and devotion to God, if only he could stop the nightmares of Danny.

On this day besides flying our ten-cent kites, I had brought along a new five-foot fiberglass bow and the one arrow that came in the package. My mother's new boyfriend had made the previous Christmas a lot better; he realized he could get to the mother through the heart of the son. My new friend Clark and I, with the one arrow we had between us, stood 500ft apart and shot the arrow back and forth to each other for the longest period of time. My kite was still flying after I tied it to the ground with a rock. Finally, out of boredom and the belief that I'd become a better archer, I sent my arrow on its way as I had done so many times through out that day, straight up and through the kite. I watched the V of paper and strings slowly descend to the ground. My smiles and feelings of pride for shooting an arrow were quickly overshadowed by the loud screams of my wounded friend, as the arrow entered his leg. My fear and horror was instant, as the blood and screams alerted the whole area, for blocks around. I was in deep trouble and I knew it. With several dozen people now giving care and first aid, I was left with rest of his friends trying to explain this simple accident.

A few months before, two new families of Lakota Sioux Indians had arrived and moved up on the hill above us for cheap housing. Their distaste for all of us was quickly very clear, but Clark's family had lived so close to all of them, that they had become fast and loyal friends. Their enemies were their enemies and on this day I was the one that would feel the wrath and pain of "Indians" everywhere in the neighborhood. They began to provoke and bully and push. I was embarrassed, scared and humiliated, but I would fight. Calling on every boxing, wrestling and street brawling ability my friends Tommy, Spencer, Pete and Warren had ever delivered to me or taught me, I exploded in a rage of left and right hooks. I swung on the youngest brother and he hit the ground crying. The next brother in line, slightly taller than I was, would be caught with the best uppercut to the stomach I had ever thrown. As he laid there gasping for air, I received a vicious blow to my eye from the oldest of the three. Looking up now at a figure, full in manhood and size, I realized I was about to be beaten very badly.

I slowly stood up with only one eye working and I waited for the next attack. The crowd around me had grown to several dozen people now, with my friend Clark long gone to the hospital. Even full-grown adults throughout the crowd were doing everything in their power to provoke and incite this beating. Even then I couldn't help wondering how I had made so many enemies or how I had offended so many people throughout the neighborhood. It felt as though everyone in Washington State wanted me beaten. With both fist held close to my cheeks I waited for the inevitable. Suddenly one side of the crowd had opened and a white man in is late teens walked through. Somehow this guy, looked different, walked differently and behaved with confidence and pride. Standing now face to face with the Indian of my deliverance he still was a good foot shorter, but he gave no quarter. As he pushed the oldest of the three he remarked, "Why don't you hit me? Come on big man, beat me." As my larger then life opponent made a move, there was a crack heard around the world. A left and a right hook were delivered with such

speed and power that they sounded like the snap of a bullwhip. As the crowd stood in shock, amazement and fear, like a giant tree falling in the forest, the oldest and largest of the three brothers fell to the ground out like a light. As he stood over the now sleeping coward and bully he yelled out, "Anyone else want some of this?" The crowd and the Indians disappeared like a wave on the beach. Their still sleeping friend, now being carried over their shoulders, as they returned over the hill to their homes.

I had been saved from the beating of my life and would never forget it. For the rest of my days I would exercise, train and always, always be alert and ready. Even then I would be beaten. Many years later, I would seek out this man to humbly and gratefully thank him. He had actually become a Golden Gloves fighter at the age of eleven and as the champion of his weight division; he would go on to become one of the greatest middleweight fighters that ever fought in the professional ring. Recently I was informed of his poor health. No money, no home and no hope, as he quietly committed suicide. Out of respect for his family name, I withhold his herein.

The weather had become very hot that summer and just about everyone in the neighborhood had found their way down to the lake to swim, play, picnic and drink. Late into the darkness of night, everyone would build campfires to cook hot dogs and marshmallows to have with cool drinks and beer. Some would be brave enough or stupid enough after too many beers, to swim at night full of food and drink. Several would pay the price. I, on the other hand, would cruise around each and every campfire along with my friends and display any and all symptoms of hunger and poverty, for chicken, potato salad or leftovers. This was the time around the lake, which the love of the people from the neighborhood would glow and radiate with concern, charity and fellowship. For many nights, my friends and I would carry our soiled, Army Surplus GI sleeping bags, down to the lake to sleep out under the stars. Sometimes with a full stomach, but most of the times without. The days and nights of camping, playing war and fighting were endless. The long adventurers by foot and bike would carry me half way across the cities of South Seattle, Kent, Renton and Black Diamond. I would have no way of knowing it at the time, but this system, this regiment of endurance, this battlefield of playing war games with full contact BB Gun fights, would make me hard, smart, a damn good shot and always a loyal comrade. Unfortunately, I was about to become much smarter, much more violent and I would never put my faith in a comrade again.

After hearing that Tommy, Spencer and Warren were biking all the way to Black Diamond to camp and fish, I begged them to take me along. The tall stories of huge bass and endless trout were not lost on the ears of this twelve-year old boy. Finally they agreed. After a thorough exam of my antiquated bike and sleeping bag and with two cans of beans and one dollar to my hot-dog contribution. "One pot feeds all!" they said as I gave up the only money that I had to my name.

So off we went riding for over 50 miles to an area they called Chub Lake in Black Diamond. With our sleeping bags strapped to our seats and our fishing gear tied to our fenders, we peddled for over four hours, through Renton, up Maple Valley, across Four Corners. Finally, we stood at the shores of the most exaggerated, inflated fish story of all my childhood. Chub Lake was nothing but a swamp, the size of an ice skating rink, with moss, grass and trees growing throughout the lake. The water was maybe five feet deep in the middle, but the middle was also overgrown with old cedar trees both alive and dead. The thick grass and moss growing on the bottom of the lake prevented any casting or bottom fishing what so ever. The movement of water did show that fish were there, feeding, waiting and laughing. Our disappointment was instant, as we cussed and threw rocks and logs at this fabricated example of a true fish story.

Wanting to give this lake every opportunity to satisfy our journey, I worked my way around each and every tree on shore, slowly getting myself almost on the other side of this swamp, staring now at my friends on the other end. My eyesight and fear were as bright and instant as the Roman Candles used on the Fourth of July, as a snake the size of a baseball bat and just as fast, sprinted through the grass straight at my friends. My screaming could be heard for miles as another snake, this one bigger and maybe faster, left the grassy swamp. Realizing I had entered the Florida Everglades of the Northwest, I bolted like a mad man out of the swamps as more and more of the snake's offspring began to appear. Finally reaching my three friends, the look on their faces as the first bull snake arrived on their shore, would show three young men with fifteen-year-old fear at its

best. It would also show four big, strong, tough, explorers of the wilderness, as they screamed in a panic and fled for their survival. It would show them at their worst. That evening I would get my second lesson on “buddies”, “friends” and “comrades in arms”.

After finding a campsite that kept all of us out of harms way, we settled in with a campfire and our G I Army Surplus sleeping bags. With knives at the ready by each and every soldier and one .22 rifle locked and loaded, we prepared for one of the longest nights ever. We were prepared to fight to the death if required, to defend ourselves from any and all animals of the wilderness. We would not be disappointed. At the time, I had already found disappointment in my share of “One pot feeds all.” The package of hot dogs that we were able to afford through group contributions seemed to have disappeared faster than the bull snakes of the north. My one and only dog, with mustard and a bun, would vanish forever in hunger and greed by my fellow soldiers of fortune. I would not forget it.

I would also not forget the very next morning as I smelled the familiar odor of urine and witnessed the soiled sleeping bag of my closest companion. Throwing my eyes quickly away to avoid his humiliation and embarrassment, I realized that it had been him the night before that I had heard talking in his sleep, pleading and crying, for Danny Kleeboe. It had been well over a year and a half now since his death and even then the pain and fear by all the young men sleeping around me had never gone away. Looking back, I realize that since that terrible day, not one of us had or ever would enter the waters of Hicks Lake again. Not one would dive, swim or race across those shores, individually or in a group. Each of the young men around me was at the ripe old age of 15 and had not yet conquered the fear of death. The vicious animals and campfire horror stories were no exceptions and certainly didn't help.

Tale after tale of murder, kidnapping, torture and death were the theme of the evening before. The unexpected, lost alley cat, mice and owls, uninvited waterfowl of the swamp and possible Anaconda bull snake returning, made for a long night. Several years later as a US Navel Seabee and Army pilot candidate, my childhood memory of adolescent fear, endurance and hunger, made those Army hardships and conditions greatly buffered and almost laughable.

The third and fourth lessons I would learn on this morning, after not eating for over twenty-four hours, were neither a plan nor a joke. First someone had stolen the only can of Fruit Cocktail that was found for miles. Someone had stolen it from me. And I had stolen it from the little store along Maple Valley Highway, as the old man watching the counter turned his head to grasp two packs of Camel Cigarettes for the four dangerous bikers with sleeping bags of wars gone by and fishing rods of steel and determination.

Lesson four came when ultimately, four defeated, fishless and starving boys and with the theme of, “All for one and one for all”, long forgotten, we headed out for the forty some odd miles home. But there was a problem. The inspection of my bike by my mutual travelers failed to discover the bald tires of many miles gone by. It also failed to expose the fact that compressed air would no longer ride along inside the oval of the tires. I had a flat. They didn't and so off they went. Those liars of the bayou, those thieves of canned food and hot dogs, those cowardly run out biking bastards had left me. For the

longest period of time I pushed my bike over hill after hill heading towards the town of Maple Valley. I couldn't help but think to myself that if anyone of them had returned to help or support me, I would have instantly forgiven them. I understood that we had endured the many miles together and had suffered the harsh hot conditions of our long journey and dilemma. But as I started to walk north out of Black Diamond I realized that on this day, that was not going to happen. No one was coming back.

My desire to carry my G.I. Bag and pole and leave this old relic of a bike was as great as my hunger and thirst, already feeling the heat from the sun and the two-lane asphalt road. But in those days, in the early 50's, we would receive so little of anything with value or cost that I knew this was my only and highest prized possession. I received it with great enthusiasm even though I quickly recognized a rebuilt bike for a greatly reduced price. It would do, I was on my way and she was mine. Many years later, while watching my grandchildren play with their abundance of toys, bikes and cloths, I would silently express my feelings, "If they only knew." Even then as a small boy with all the vices and corruption of an adolescent convict, I had acquired one quality – loyalty. It did not come without shame or now hardship.

A few months earlier my friend and I, Stan, had decided to ride to Downtown Seattle to see one of many movies showing and to walk the many stores for adventure, opportunity and theft. After all our adventures through out the day, early darkness and hunger made it clear, it was time to go home. As Stan reached into his pocket for the dime of transit and escape, the bus driver yelled out, "let's go kids", as Stan's hand came out empty. Somehow in all the travels of the day, he had lost or had inadvertently spent his last dime. Now as darkness fell, with the lights going dim through out the city, their Stan stood on the curb penniless and scared. But he still had one ace in the hole, one ally, one buddy and one friend. Or did he? As I boarded the bus I couldn't help but think that after numerous fistfights, burglaries and escapes from the Sheriff that I was always on my own. Looking out of the back of the bus at the city of crooks, queers and child molesters and seeing Stan crying by the curb, I almost said out loud, "I must protect myself, first, second and third!" I also felt ashamed the rest of my days, as I had truly fallen to a new low. I had left my catcher, my little league friend, my fishing buddy and I would never forgive my self.

So, I suppose turnabout is fair play, as my three older buddies disappeared into the sunset and I once again would receive confirmation that my survival, safety and life would only continue with a self serving, independent, prejudice and biased attitude. At last after several stops for air that refused to hang around, I was cruising down the only hill on the entire trip. Just before Cedar River, there is a small turnout to the right taking you back up next to the river going up the valley. The summer heat, long distance to home and the hunger made for tough times and tough decisions. And I made one. With several cars right on the back of my fender and the effect of a very low tire on the shoulder of gravel, I took a dive. Falling like a wounded goose, I hit the gravel slid over the small bank and pretended I was dead. Instantly both lanes of traffic stopped. People with water, first aid, concern and food appeared all around me as I dwelled in the valley of phony. By now, dozens of rescuers had applied any and all first aid required to my injuries, as I miraculously regained consciousness.

Slowly but surely, this now diagnosed sun stroke victim, with a few road scratches and bruises, was helped up and escorted to one of the many waiting vehicles heading north to Renton. As I limped and talked incoherently, I was laid to rest in the back seat of the finest Buick Deluxe Sedan that would ever run the highway. My bike, which I refused to leave, along with one sleeping bag and fishing rod, were the first time guests in a trunk that had never seen daylight, let alone wheels of mud and the rotten smell of hot, sun baked, fish eggs. With the back seat as big and wide as a ping-pong table, I stretched out and gave my new host the impressions of delayed healing and partial brain damage. My recovery would take lots of time and many miles. I pondered my dilemma and faked moderate pain, while weaving a story and plan that was straight from the devil himself. I spoke of our long journey without food or water. I told them about how I'd learned the truth at last - no fish, big snakes, a flat tire and my friend's dissertation, as they now headed home without me. Praise Be. By the end of the story the women was in tears and her husband was furious. I weaved the lies of my perilous journey, now grasping with both hands the silver foil of the greatest deluxe cheeseburger and french-fries that had ever been eaten. As we worked our way down the valley toward the town of Renton, I knew I was stuck between a lie and a lie and had to quickly design a story that would encourage this Buick to go all the way to White Center. I hoped to make the entire trip, without being exposed as a con and a liar and without having to deliver the fictitious reward that I just knew my non-existent rich father would gladly pay. Think Ronnie. Think.

There is a place in downtown Renton where the two-lane highway used to cross over four sets of railroad tracks. Anyone crossing over the tracks would have to slow way down to keep from suddenly losing control of the car or truck they were driving. The summer heat was intense now, as I rolled the huge back window down for fresh cool air and the ride of a lifetime. Just as I held both arms slightly outside the vehicle for comfort, a smile came across my face from ear to ear; I would remember this moment forever. There standing on the railroad landing, waiting to cross, were my three deserting bayou bastard buddies and they looked like they were having some problems. One bike was missing a chain; one had a flat tire and the one that was just fine, had a rider on it that sat calmly eating a fresh can of Fruit Cocktail. By God, it's a miracle, the can had as if through some divine intervention, had been found. Having very little time for small talk, I whistled loudly a shrill that all three would recognize at once. Their heads all came up at just about the same time as I rolled my palms upward with elevated middle fingers and left a message that would last a life time. As we crossed over the tracks, the driver remarked, "Friends of yours?" I spoke very softly, "No sir, no friends of mine, never seen them before in my life."

Slowly but surely, we worked our way through Sea-Tac, around Burien and within a block of my home in White Center. I kept silently repeating. Think Ronnie, think. And then it came to me. The driver was very eager to meet my parents, especially my rich father. The women beside him kept repeating over and over that a reward and expenses would be very appropriate. My chauffeur and would be millionaires were directed straight to my two story home of wall-to-wall brick and flowered landscaping. After unloading my bike, bag and pole, I went around to the backyard to find my so-

called rich father. Softly, I opened the gate to the back alley as I quietly left the residence of the finest home, of the richest people on 11th SW. I sprinted north flat tire and all up the back access, two blocks away to my house. I had made it home with guts and determination and survival bullshit. They would never fail me. Many years later, I would find out that the bike riders of many of my adventures and crime, would become a doctor, and psychologists, an airplane fabricator, and a salesman who had been dishonorably discharged from the Marine Corps, prosecuted for theft and is currently fighting lung cancer, broke on Medicaid but still with a love for Fruit-Cocktail.

Billy, my Little League friend, would go on to become a very good street fighter. He would defend me, at more than one dance and more than one fight. He also became a professional water skier, commercial fisherman, and lifetime trucker living in Oregon. With all my heart, I embrace him. "Stan the Man", the catcher, would never have to worry about finding a dime again. He became quite rich, with his own car lot in the town of Puyallup, Washington. I would always regret our loss of friendship and forever admire his courage and miss his camaraderie. A finer ball player you would never find. Early cancer has him now fighting for his life. In September of 2006 Stan the man, my catcher, my childhood friend, would loose his fight with oral Cancer as he left this world smiling and laughing, holding a fishing rod in one hand, and a cigarette in the other, as he inter the field of mortal athletes, and the ages. Clark, with the arrow in his leg, lives just down the street and doesn't even remember me. He limps and I'm not saying a word. Recently I was informed of his early death as well. Jack my other good friend, who so many times gave me food and shelter and the love and protection of his family, has passed on as well. All my childhood friends are now leaving me. Oh, how very much I loved them. And needed them.

Several years later in the US Navy, the US Army and the US National guard, I would learn the true meaning of the word teammate, diving buddy and co-pilot. I would never, ever again, leave a teammate, working buddy or friend behind, so help me God. Although there would be times that I would surely be tested. But what did I know I was only 13.

Finally summer was gone as I entered junior high school. The complete south half of the deserted golf course that had once been covered with huge Douglas Firs and rolling hills of wheat, were now cleared of every tree leveled hill to hill. It would never be the same again. In its place now stood Evergreen Junior and Senior High School that would receive the next generation of leaders and convicts. I had fought against the future construction site the minute I witnessed the trees falling down and the earth of my play days being heavily rearranged. They had no way of knowing it, but they had made their closest and worst enemy.

Just ask my neighbors in West Seattle. With match guns and an anger that had grown for over 13 years now, I set out late at night down the hill to pursue my enemies. Running from 10th Avenue east all the way up to the area they called Lakewood and back down around the lake again to 10th, I delivered my message of fire and anger and a silent cry for help. Within minutes the entire area was engulfed in the flames of all things hateful, delivered by someone who was terribly ignored, abused and very angry. The flames could be seen for miles, as fire trucks from miles around, addressed the six-alarm emergency. The homes on all, North, South and East borders of the school were threatened. After several hours, the fire was brought under control, surprisingly with very little damage. Say one. Clark's brother, who just a few years back had greatly encouraged my sever beating by his neighbors to the east, now stood before a completely destroyed automobile. Sometimes the flames of revenge and justice deliver a long over due message of payback.

In time both schools would be finished, with a smaller school built years later right beside the lake called Cascade Junior High. The investigation by Fire Marshals and school officials would last for months as they promoted and advertised there big find. One commando match gun. But today on the first day of school it was very warm or hot, something they would call Indian summer and no one after this period of time would ever witness, or see again, the flames of anger and hatred delivered by the terror of Hicks Lake. I was about to get help.

As dozens of my new found friends headed for the cool of the lake, I sprinted home to find the swimsuit that I hadn't seen, nor worn for over two years since Danny's death. I kept telling myself that I didn't even have to swim. Just put it on and lay on the towel and pretend your enjoying the day and the sun. With maybe four, dozen kids and adults in the water, I found myself to be the only one laying on a blanket, white as a sheet from no summer sun and skinny as a rail from very little food. I felt like I stood out like a beached stranded whale.

I finally started to relax and truly enjoy the sun, the warmth and the lake. It had been a long time since I embraced her shores and I was beginning to see a change around me and soon a change within me. New visitors to the lake were now arriving by the car loads, as three girls laid out their blankets and towels and discreetly discussed their opinions of the young men and boys now swimming and parading before their eyes. Within earshot, out the corner of my eye, I saw her, as she prepared to inter the water and change the lake forever. With a swimsuit that covered her body from her armpits to her thighs she casually walked to the waters edge. No amount of stretch nylon or string could

hide the body of Venus on this day. She had the face of a Junior High beauty and the body of Miss America. But the figure of this girl went far beyond any annual beauty contest. With her body now totally tanned from the long days of summer, she possessed the color and walk of a through-bred and with the most gorgeous legs I had ever seen. But one thing more, she had been born with the genes for an incredible bust line that had now delivered their value right before my eyes. Be still my heart, be still, as I tried to ignore my mind and my body, neither which was doing very well.

The gods of Hicks Lake smiled from ear to ear as their most beautiful goddess entered the water, with me right behind her. With every young man old man or any man, going out of his way to showoff, stare and drool, I almost broke out laughing. Even the tall Lombardi trees on the high banks around us turned their heads and stared and smiled as they wished she would venture for a climb. When she dove off the end of the pier, each and every swimmer silently prayed for nylon failure on a swimsuit or that the bubbles that were now caressing her body would slowly pass between their arms. Never before had this little lake received so much body heat, adrenalin or testosterone, as every male attempted to dive in all at once, quickly hiding any signs of arousal or desire. I had one eye on her body and one eye on the muddy quicksand at the bottom of a lake that had killed so many people, including Danny and had left those living, including me, with terrible night sweats and nightmares.

Finally my mind and body had had enough and it became very hard to swim and drool at the same time. With a strong dive off the pier, I aggressively swam toward the north side of the lake to challenge my fear of the place where Danny's body had surfaced. Just about the time the cold and horrors of the deep ran through my body, I heard her voice not three feet from my shoulders. "How far are you going to make me swim just to say hello?" Instantly my mind was completely clear of all grief and fear that several deaths at a young age had created. For at least an hour we would enjoy the lake, the laughter of my envious classmates and each other. They called her Riley and for several days I was the envy of all my class. I would be forever grateful to this young Venus of Hicks Lake. For the rest of my life and into my marriage, I would compare all the women that I viewed in cloths and swimsuits to her figure and beauty like a template from the gods. After that day I would never swim in Hicks Lake again and only returning to her shores twice in the past forty years.

The strength and endurance that I had developed from that lake would just a few years later qualify me for US Navy Underwater Swim School in Key West Florida. But soon swimming ashore in training, the fears of long ago, along with a sea snake right through my face, made this a poor career choice as I rang the bell to drop. After that last swim in Hicks Lake I would never have nightmares of Danny again. Also my anger and fierce hatred would be replaced by desire, passion and healing.

But throughout my entire adult life, and even now into old age, Hicks Lake and the wheat fields that embraced her shores would always be calling me. From the Easter egg hunts, pasture baseball, and B.B gun war games. To old cars, rock and roll music, ice-skating and water log rafts. And yes, the morning aroma of trees, water and Lilly pads competing for my attention from all the beautiful girls of fragrance and desire that would join me by her shores for endless hours of teenage passion and the stolen days of our summers. God I loved it so. But what do I know. I'm only thirteen.

Sometime that last summer early in the evening, my friends and I decided to hitch hike out to the only racetrack that South Seattle had. The Sea-Tac Speedway was a 1/8th of a mile of asphalt in the shape of an oval with high wooden walls completely surrounding the track and the bleachers. Having no money to pay our way in, we still derived immense pleasure viewing the race through the cracks in the giant wooden wall. Sometimes we even climbed the huge advertising billboards to look down on the track. For many races, my friends and I would have five star entertainment and front row seats and we knew every driver by his car and reputation. Recalling more clearly now, it was the Fourth of July in the evening of 1956, we were laughing and betting on our favorite car and driver and were starving. We were always starving, always hungry, always looking for something, anything to reduce this pain. After smelling the aroma of steamed hot dogs and hamburgers, I decided I had had enough, enough of the hunger, enough of the pain and enough of the body weight disappearing from my frame. Climbing down from our exclusive perch, my friends and I slowly worked our way around to the back of the bleachers like the Commandos, sneaks and thieves that we were.

The track owners had strung wire 8ft high all around the backside of the bleachers for safety and security. Looking from behind the bleachers and up at the highest seat, the 30 foot fall could make any climber turn coward and I was no exception. But I had something else in mind. With my friends manning security and walking point, I climbed over the 8ft fence, barbed wire and all and came down inside the fence and underneath the bleachers filled with a thousand people. Walking upright first then bent over and then crawling on my knees, I finally arrived at the bottom step on my chest. The light from the racetrack gave me all the visibility I needed, as I slithered like the snake that I was, the full length of the of the bottom step. At last I arrived at the very end of the bleachers, on the bottom step, on my belly staring at the feet of one the biggest son of a bitch's that ever lived, walked or talked. On several occasions when my friends and I had arrived for entertainment and racing, we would offer to clean, scrub or cleanup anything, just to watch the races from inside. As he stood beside the entrance gate chewing his tobacco, he carefully and methodically delivered all coins and bills to a small metal box that now sat on the very bottom of the bleachers.

A few weeks back on the opening day of racing, my friends and I had arrived excited and eager to see racing at its best and to just enjoy the atmosphere of the track and the fast cars. After prodding and begging and pleading for a free pass from this man, this king of all gate keepers, this track owner, even when we offered to work, the only answer we ever received was no. With a spit of tobacco, straight down on my head as all the people of the track and my friends would observe, he screamed at all of us. "Get the hell out of here, you little bastard beggars! Get! Get!" as he struck the shoulder of my good friend. Like in the past, he had no way of knowing it at the time, but he just made his worst enemy. On my stomach now, seeing the black metal box filled with coins and bills just in front of my face, I softly reached up and extracted the one thing that this bully of the track treasured. Slowly and stealthy, I crawled half way back across the bottom of the bleachers while trying to hide my treasure and excitement. But I wasn't through.

Directly in the center front of the bottom bleacher step, was laid before me the mother load of all fireworks. For the half time entertainment, on this Fourth of July

evening, every bomb, flare, Roman candle and sparkler was laid out, waiting to explode, scream and illuminate the entire sky. The biggest of all the fireworks stood on a two-foot wooden platform with a one-foot oval cylinder and that was over three feet tall. To this very day I shall never forget the writing on its side. "No.500 Launcher" With its thick brown fuse, it was laid on its right side against the bottom step. I gently reached over and out with barely an inch to spare and encouraged this mother load of Rockets Red Glare to join me underneath the bleachers. Quickly back to the fence that had previously imprisoned me, I scrambled up as fast as I could and handed down the finest treasure the Fourth of July had to offer.

Nobody could have felt more excited or gratified about our future fireworks display or the metal box that now lay close to my chest. Running and laughing, singing and laughing, we couldn't get down the highway fast enough, as I overheard the last words coming from the racetrack viewers. "He was under the bleachers." With our luck still holding as we hitchhiked up old Highway 99, a pickup with a man and his wife pulled over and yelled out, "You boys tired of walking?" Seated now behind the cab, my anticipation and hunger couldn't wait any longer. They say that curiosity killed the cat, but I just couldn't wait. Either could my friends or our hunger. I opened the metal container. There before my eyes was a vision of many trips to play pool, to bowl, to roller skate, to watch movies, to buy baseballs and new mitts, to go fishing, to impress the girls, but most of all to EAT and EAT and EAT. And eat we did for weeks on end.

We swore on the graves of our dogs, that we would never divulge who the racetrack thief was or what the contents of that metal box were. And I never will. The huge rocket launcher was set-aside for a raining day, deep in the caverns of my basement closet. Several months later, that rainy day would arrive, but for right now, I had things to do, places to go and food, mostly hamburgers, ice cream and doughnuts, to eat. Thank you, thank you, I kept repeating to myself.

Today, just north of the Midway Drive-In, on old highway 99, a huge K-Mart sits right on the spot where the bleachers once were. On that day of the fourth of July, the spectators and racecars witnessed one the biggest paybacks that three very hungry boys would ever deliver. As one of those starving boys, I apologize to no man.

One evening that same summer, I had just received my first complaint from a girl in the back seat of an old junky car, on my lacking of necking and kissing techniques. With my buddy and his girl now rolling in the front seat of this old wrecked car, from explosive laughter and lust, I became very embarrassed and filled with anger. I was immediately determined to master this skill and ongoing talent. Even if I had to hire a teacher, which I did. The next day I set out to find a tutor or instructor who could send me on my way to adulthood and help me master this highly respected talent, which I obviously did not possess at the time. Just turning thirteen I still had an awful lot to learn.

Just down the hill from my home lived the one women teacher or dancer that every kid in the neighborhood knew and every adult father still wanted. Her daily job in Seattle was what we called burlesque dancing. In her forties then, she was starting to show her age but her body was still eighteen. Her female beauty and figure were famous throughout Seattle and the entire west coast. This woman was neither bashful nor small

as all the pictures on her walls proudly displayed. After knocking on her door, I waited patiently filled with fear and humiliation. I was desperate and would not fail at this future skill again. After answering her door clothed in something transparent and loose, I made her an offer she has never received before or since. I would mow her yard once a week, in exchange for weekly instructions on kissing or necking techniques. God I had guts then. Her laughter could be heard for blocks around, but her grass was now six inches deep and this lawn mower of passion and youthful lust had just arrived in time. I was invited in and the door was closed behind me.

After being sworn to secrecies I began my weekly instruction. By the end of the summer, her front yard resembled the same budding green of any exclusive golf course throughout the world. And I became, for the first time in my life, a straight A student. Today I suppose she would be arrested. If it were up to me, she would receive a medal. Whenever I smell the spring of fresh cut grass, I think of this woman and just silently thank her and smile broadly. God what a woman.

Snow came a briefly in November around Thanksgiving. I knew it would only last a day or two, so I made six hardball size snowballs for deposit into our freezer. Their targets would be decided or directed in a week or two. After waiting several days and constantly looking in the freezer with anticipation, the temptation became just too great. Removing all six from the freezer with my mother by my side, I delivered my concrete oval forms to a small bag and went out into the cold night air. They used to be called snowballs of winter play. We called them ice-balls. Today they are called grenades and they were deadly. It seems that during that time, I was always striking out at other kids, schools, property or anything that we did not have. I felt so much rage and anger that it was a daily and hourly event just to remain civil. On this night in cold November, I would once again step up to the pitchers mound and deliver with southpaw accuracy and speed my message of hunger, rage, abuse and severe neglect.

Along the two lane highway that connects White Center to Burien they call today Ambuam Way, my friends and I found a place to hide like the night Commandoes we were, patiently waiting for the right time and the right place to launch our winter weapons. After several tempting targets and water now leaking from my hands and bag I let go of one of the greatest pitches I had ever thrown. Leading the eighteen wheeler by maybe 30 feet, I wasn't content to just hit the semi truck as it blew by us at a much higher speed than allowed, I just had to make it more personnel and direct. With my signature curve, my fastball found its target, flying through the window and striking the jaw of one now sleepy truck driver. With our eyes now as big as silver dollars, all hell was about to be let loose.

The semi-truck veered hard to the right shoulder and the fender hooked the long high cyclone fence that proudly provided security for the many used cars for sale bordering the fence line. Still traveling at high speed, the semi now had the momentum and power to take out several hundred feet of fence as it continued south. The concrete posts that popped out of the ground like a giant mad toaster were the real source of damage. Every post, with ten-foot centers, was ripped from the ground, flipped over like a sledgehammer on the hoods of every used car in line. Oh what destruction and damage I caused on that night. As the semi-truck slowly came to a stop and the driver at last regained control, we exploded in a run of screams and laughter and also fear. Most men, after getting hit this hard in the jaw, would slowly recover and heal. But not this guy, not this driver. Standing well over 6 foot 6, he was tough and hard and he could run like a deer, as the flight of our lives was on. Heading east towards Hicks Lake we fought desperately to get further and further in to the night air and away from his vision.

As my two friends entered their homes, I was left as cannon fodder to deflect attention away from them. All the danger now was on my shoulders where it rightfully belonged anyway. Damn, I was sorry as I looked over my shoulder and realized he was gaining on me and I would soon be beaten severely or to death if I were caught. Reaching my grandmother's home, I only had one more block to go to reach my own house, but I had a problem. My breath, strength and endurance were all spent. I had nothing left to give. I was completely exhausted. I was still able to think clearly enough to see that standing in front of my grandmother's house stood the sisters ship of the giant Madronas of my childhood play. Reaching her limbs I barely had the strength to pull myself to her higher branches of concealment and safety. Finding her fragrance up in the leaves and

bark of yesterdays adventures and even though I was tired, I thought of my friend Stephanie and silently kissed her.

For the next two hours I would sit perched on my cocoon of protection and security. Four separate times within feet of this tree, one determined and furious trucker would pass by her branches and base, without the slightest sign that I was within arms length. At last with steam vaporizing off his shoulders into the cold night air, one tough, determined and courageous trucker, slowly with exhaustion and without the kill he had intended, headed back towards his severely damaged semi. I had won. Or did I? Finally reaching my home I entered my basement bedroom, drained, humiliated and I believe for the first time in my life, ashamed and conscious of my terrible behavior.

After that night I would never again throw another snowball. Each and every time I went by my grandmother's house I would silently kiss that tree and Stephanie. I would also have a lifetime respect for all truck drivers.

It was December now, 1956, a winter that was mild and very rainy. I was in the first year of Junior High and for the first time in my life, school was a real pleasure. Rock and Roll had arrived, Elvis, fast cars, fast girls and faster me. The entire year it seemed that there were beautiful girls everywhere. They were in class, at house parties and at the local dances. Like drinking Kool-Aid on a hot summer day, I just couldn't get enough. I also found that courting seven or eight girls at once could become very difficult, as I stumbled over the many lies I told. Obviously there was a problem here. I'd spent so many years stealing, hiding, running and lying, that I didn't know where the truth began or ended. I knew one thing for sure, whether in the back seats of an old car, in my arms at a school dance or in the field of grass and trees around Hicks Lake, girls looked better, smelled better, felt better and tasted better than anything on earth. For that period of time, I was in heaven.

I always loved to sing, at home, fishing or at school in choir, where I would receive my only decent grade. The arrival of Rock and Roll, hit tunes and the many great singers of my time were not lost on this boy who hadn't even hit fourteen yet. Some singers were so handsome and good, that women fainted right in their seats or in the aisles of the theater. The girls knew every tune, every song and every future Elvis that could sing them. Anyone who had the courage to try to follow his or her lead might make a complete fool of himself. But if they had some semblance of talent, some sound that caught the audience's ear with a pleasant melody or catchy tune, they would feel the love and popularity of the entire school and receive their 15 minutes of glory.

I was never lacking in some courage and I wanted my 15 minutes. Boy did I ever. Two other classmates and I started a singing group that performed at various school assemblies, talent shows and even once on the local TV. Singing a few of the popular hits of the day, we sounded fairly good even without any music. Being the lead singer, I was completely overwhelmed and pleasantly shocked as I was greeted with screams from girls, applause, approval and school wide instant popularity. The girls were so abundant and friendly that I didn't know which way to turn, or which one to hold in my arms first. But I certainly tried to please them all. Boy did I try.

Christmas had just past and everyone was home for the holidays. Everyone that is, except my mother who always had to work to survive and pay what bills she could. My father, who had been gone for over four years by then, had remarried and had continued not to send any money or help in any way. Were it not for the help of our Grandmother down the street and the weekend food my mother's boyfriend would deliver, I'm sure I would not be here today. Still, having a few dollars to my name, my friends and I decided to go to White Center to roller skate for New Year's Eve with all our new school friends. For less than a dollar, after skate rental, a person could roll around the hardwood oval for three hours until the nails coming through the bottom of the skates, became too painful to continue. At 12 o'clock midnight the cheers and cries of Happy New Year, the laughter, smiles and kisses, from every girl in the room would deliver me to a place I could only describe as teenage heaven. God, I loved that night that time that place, forever.

Soon after the 1:00 o'clock closing we were back on the streets, in the cold hitchhiking and trying to suppress our new found hormones. It seemed as though my

mind was always going 90 miles an hour and since I couldn't forget the fragrance of all those girls I just wasn't willing to close out this night. I also had not forgotten that deep in the caverns of my basement was the No 500 Launcher of Rockets Red Glare. The night was about to change.

After reaching my home with my friends, we loaded up the Launcher, along with a new friend, who had an old car and headed for South Seattle's Boulevard Park area. Just below Old Foster Golf Course, runs a road slightly downhill called Des Moines Way. On a concrete bridge over a deep canyon, we waited for all the car traffic to disappear. Just about the time I was ready to light the fuse from our grand larceny, our new friend decided he wanted no part of this obviously delinquent act. He couldn't leave fast enough, but not until he'd received many parting shots. We screamed, "You'll be sorry!" and "chicken shit" as he sped away in his car. With the road deep black and void of all traffic, north and south, it was now or never. Six months of anticipation, six months of locker room stories and six months of racetrack revenge were about to be voiced loud and high.

Immediately after lighting the fuse, I realized the color of the flame and the aggression of burn on the wick, was very different from any fireworks or explosives I had ever seem. For the first time, I was a little bit sorry, a little bit scared and a little bit chicken shit. My friends and I did a little bit of hiding and ducking underneath and behind the concrete bridge. Without an explosion or fire, the launcher released something that even today I can only describe as a huge release of compressed air. Then there was a sound of WOOSSSSSSSSSSS and the rapid climb of something long, round and very deceiving. As we came out from beneath the bridge with our tails between our legs, there was a loud crack of the detonation and a flash that was modestly delivered to three very disappointed racetrack thieves. Anticipation, failure and the loss of future bragging rights were the only thoughts that came to mind as we started walking up the highway toward home. But sometimes the best-laid plans of mice and thieves and little boys, just take a little longer and a little longer to develop. At long last, BOOOMMMMMMM! As the second stage of this minuteman missile continued to climb and then again, BOOOMMMMMMMMMMM. This time it would explode with such power and force that windows, dogs, cats and children for blocks around would crack, bark, meow or cry. With a glow of flames, a sparkle and a flash of light from several dozen smaller explosions, the sky was lit-up for miles around. This was obviously the elite launcher at the racetrack that would have delivered the force and sound necessary to get your attention. IT DID. To this very day, I have never run as fast or laughed as hard as I did running down the highway that night. Most of Boulevard Park that night, would hear the three of us singing, "Halleluiah! Halleluiah! Halleluiah! Halleluiah!" We then headed for the long walk home. The next day the Seattle papers ran front-page Stories about an unexplained explosion and hundreds of windows that had been broken, with future possible arrest. Yeah right.

One of the most exciting events during these early times was the new and ever changing automobiles that came off the manufacturing floors of Detroit, Michigan. Every adult in the neighborhood, had this model, or that one new design, or that one big engine that made you the king of speed and makes you go faster and faster. Every boy for blocks around knew every model, manufacturer, year made or car slogan or design. As a kid I

was green with envy at those young boys or men who were already driving or even had their own cars. Most of our daily conversations were about sports, fishing, girls and our dreams of owning a fine new car or a rebuilt one called a rod or a sled. My inability to drive a car, let alone own one, was painful and in front of classroom girls very embarrassing. After voicing my frustration to a school friend two years older than me, he politely offered to teach me a few lessons behind the wheel. For several days I would meet Paul after class and be allowed the privilege of occupying the driver's seat. We drove throughout the White Center area, never leaving the side roads, never going over 30 mph and never displaying any reckless or dangerous driving behavior. For several weeks this young man was the older brother I should have had. What a gentleman he was, what a friend. Look out world here I come, for on these days I was happy as a young man could be.

Now I had freedom. And now I knew how to drive. So at last I was all grown up. Or was I? While waiting for school to let out, my classmates and I were sitting and talking, anticipating the bell and dismissal when the principle of our school walked in. Knowing my discipline and behavior was improving; I patiently waited for him to leave so I could be let loose to find "auto excellence" and sincere pleasure in my friend's old Pontiac Sedan. But after this day, Paul, my friend would never come to school again or drive or play or fish or hold a young beautiful girl in his arms or anything again. On a hill leaving Boulevard Park heading east towards old 99, you will find the pole and the steep high bank beyond that took the life of my childhood teacher and friend and older brother forever. Paul Kapelos was a leader and symbol of all things good and decent in the reflections of a young man. He was only seventeen. My classmates and I were completely devastated. I walked straight out of class without my books or coat or dismissal, I slowly found my way home to my basement and privacy. I realized then by my loss of my friend forever and my outpouring of tears, that I had not grown up much and I was once again alone with my pain and nightmares.

It was almost June now and school would be letting out soon giving me the freedom to run and play. This last year had become the best school year of all my childhood days except for the death of my friend Paul, which I was still having trouble getting over. Sports down at the field house in White Center, our singing group and all the girls had me extremely happy. Unfortunately, the years of hunger and malnutrition had severely hurt my sisters and myself. I had just turned fourteen and all my adult teeth and gums had begun to show severe signs of decay and infection. My sisters had one thing going for them that I did not, their beauty. They had grown up very distant from me, as we all struggled just to survive. But there was never a time that I was not conscious of or proud of their beauty and the fact that they were my sisters. The constant hunger I had experience growing up had produced a 115 lbs teenager. I was very skinny and hadn't grown very tall I had also watched too many movies, seen too many heroes and come to believe that all avenues to man-hood started with standing up for you and fighting for yourself. Boy what a mistake. The cheers, praise and loving attention from all the girls after we sang, was not lost on all the boys or young men who couldn't or wouldn't sing. Their resentment, anger and jealousy soon reared its ugly head.

After a few unflattering comments by a student one grade up, he blindsided me and I found my way to the bathroom floor, pinned and beaten. I made it back to my classroom seat, but the pain and humiliation was severe. I stewed and stewed and eventually unable to control myself, I bolted from inside my classroom, down the hall and into his. I looked throughout the class for my newfound enemy with uncontrollable anger. As he stood up I delivered two, maybe three blows to his wide-eyed face as the entire class exploded in cheers. Quickly, the bigger kids in class grabbed us and they escorted us out of the room, but not until I heard the many cheers and applause from most of his class. My pride had returned.

A few days later this hallway bully who just wouldn't leave it alone, challenged me again, as another verbal insult was sent my way. For the rest of the day as I sat in class anxious and full of fear, I knew he had at least forty pounds and a foot of height on me. I also figured that this would be settled out on the streets after school. I was in deep trouble and I knew it. Soon all the experiences of my past, good and bad, along with the strong believeth that sooner or later I would have to stand up and fight won over. And so it was, I found myself at three o'clock that afternoon pinned on the asphalt of 11th S W by a bigger, older and tougher fighter than me. With one eye now closed and my neck being twisted 180 degrees, my savior would arrive. He had watched me for four years, skinny, troubled and running out for the longest passes an ex quarterback could ever deliver at PE class. Coach Briggem had arrived from across the street seeing the beating and once again came to my aid and rescue. As I started for home with my eye closed from the beating, I was smiling as I realized once again that I had been tested in battle, had been beaten, but as always, had stood up for myself.

Many years later after several good and bad fistfights, I learned one more valuable thing. Never wait for it to happen. Move hard and fast with maximum aggression to overcome your newfound enemy. Always try to land the first blow. By then my mother had seen and witnessed enough. My temper, the larceny, truancy, fistfights, home burglaries and fires, the fact that my grades were always F's, and I became daily one

more mouth to feed. This gave her no choice. In the week of June 1957, I found myself handcuffed in the backseat of the King County Sheriff's car headed for the Youth's Service Center and life behind bars. My life would never be the same. I also would never live with my mother or sisters again. Only once or twice during the fourteen years that I lived with my family, do I remember being held or hugged. And never kissed. No wonder I was always looking for something.

My sisters and I would survive years of hunger, dissatisfaction, and poverty. Being alone day after day unprotected, and month after month with very little food or medical care, we had become the target of hunger and disease, illiteracy, poverty, dissatisfaction, and of any and all sexual predators throughout South Seattle. We would, all of us, during those fourteen years see physical and sexual abuse that would years later affect our friendship and maturity, mental stability, and health. For several years as an adult and clear into my old age of 64, I would experience periodic nightmares of that abuse for my entire adulthood, while keeping weapons below my mattress, or always close by, and praying that I have enough bullets to survive. I would spend years as an adult tracking down these predators, planning their deaths, burials and disappearance, believing I would finally be cleansed and healed. But my devotion, concern, and sincere love for my wife and two daughters allowed common sense to finally prevail. For a long period of time, and many years later up until only recently, with the help of the Department of Veterans Affairs, have I overcome the night sweats that haunted me, and explosive temper that helped me survive and forget?

It would be well over 55 years of time, into the summer of 2004, that I would find myself above old highway 99 at the Riverton Heights Cemetery visiting my mother and grandmother. Unfortunately for my immediate family, a close relation had decided that her now diseased husband, our brother-in-law, would occupy one of several families plots right beside my mother's remains. Visitation during this time with his grave headstone presence and haunting memory was extremely stressful. How very well I remember even to this day the cries, weeping, and pleading of my sisters in the dark of night, asking for understanding and help from anyone, to protect them from this monster and childhood molester. How very much I remember the beatings and my helplessness standing four foot tall and carrying the body weight of a squirrel to try to defend myself.

After my arrival on this hot sunny day a few hundred feet away, stood several dozen mourners at a new veterans burial service. With all the music and appropriate sermon flowing in the wind, black limo's, impeccable armed forces uniforms and flag covered casket, my past military training and protocol commanded my attention. Turning now 90 degrees to my left, standing at alert to a complete strangers burial service, I held my right hand over my heart as the music played the Star Spangle Banner, and then taps. Turning back now 90 degree's to my right on this bright sunny event, I removed my Zipper. Extending my antimony as far as possible with dozens of mourners and fellow veterans as witnesses, I delivered a long long overdue message from my sisters and me. I would like to believe the color of liquid signified not only the level of his character, but also the sheer volume was directly responsible for sending him further down into hell where he forever belongs. Sometimes there never seems to be enough flowers, bright skies or happy days with good memories, to make this occasion the perfect day. But on this visit, time and place, with my vast inventory of venom and urine it came pretty dam close. But what did I know. I am only 14.

It's now the first week in June 1959, one of those summer days when school couldn't close fast enough for me, or most of my classmates. The sun was baking through the window so warm I could barely focus or relax. I was now sixteen years of age, ready to attack all the lakes and rivers in the northwest. My strength and endurance were at their peak and I needed desperately to escape. I had just come through several years of living hell after my father had remarried a woman half his age. After my brief imprisonment in the summer of my fourteenth year, my sometime parent and continuous alcoholic father and a court of law decided I would live with them. His new wife had decided to make it her duty to make my life a living nightmare.

For two years she succeeded, but summer was my big escape and soon I would be free, even though years of neglect and abuse had taken their toll. For over twenty-four months, I would witness assaults, beatings, sexual teasing and provocation, the poisoning of my hunting dog, the destruction of my weapons for hunting and personnel attack, resulting in one testicular, even four years later being severely enlarged. She has no idea, how close she came to leaving. I must tell you now about one of the more painful events of my early teens. After my alcoholic father and stepmother received court custody of me in 1957, I found my home life, now completely changed. No longer was I with friends of laughter and rock and roll and Hicks Lake. No more sports with long and loyal friends. No more long list of beautiful girls, stolen cars and the White Center skating rink. No more singing, no more sisters, no more mother. I was absolutely in pain and sorrow, new friends, fistfights, black eyes and new trouble. My loneliness was overwhelming me.

Around this time my father had taken me one evening, to one of his friends homes for Sunday dinner and Sunday boozing. It seemed every time we returned home late at night after many hours of drinking that he could barely steer the car nor find our home. His new wife was no better. How we traveled those many miles without being killed or arrested was beyond me. The embarrassment and humiliation I suffered because of my father's heavy drinking, stumbling, slurring and throwing-up was very obvious to everyone who would witness these weekend events and my obvious depression. My fathers hunting friend and his wife became very aware of my isolation and clear pain. On one of these weekend drunk visits, I was invited out into the garage for a surprise. I was then handed a six-week-old puppy with Labrador and short hair breeding. The years of poverty had prevented my home life from ever having a pet or dog for clear reasons. Where do we get the food?

My joy on that day was immense as I found instant friendship, loyalty and unquestioned love. I would call him Bow and for many weeks and months, he would become the love of my life. I would spend hours with this new friend, swimming, playing and training and trying to overcome this longing and loneliness for my past family. For a while it worked as we traveled throughout the north end of Seattle delivering newspapers, with weekend swimming, dog hunting and training down on Green Lake. His presence by my stepmother was not welcomed and sometimes the very small back yard behind our house where he kenneled and slept had a foul stench beyond question. But he was mine without a doubt. And I loved him daily, final and forever. We would be together for over eighteen months. Around this time my father had decided to leave with his friends for weekend fishing and drinking up in Canada. So off they went for several days, while I stayed at home trying not to go crazy with fear and isolation. But for some reason my

stepmother had decided to stay at home claiming she had to work and had things to do around the house.

The first two nights, while I attempted to watch TV, she walked around the living room in a clear nightgown and nothing else. The beauty of her body was driving me crazy with desire. I was also feeling very ashamed of sexual arousal towards my father's wife and my disloyalty. But I couldn't stop looking. My hot upstairs bedroom didn't help as I tossed and turned all night seeing her naked body with my adolescent desire and lust. On that Saturday evening, I returned home around nine-o'clock to find my father's wife, now with a visiting new male friend, drinking and listening to music. Realizing quickly I was not welcome, I found my way to my room after casual introductions and awkward conversation. After they went out for the evening, I was left with a decision to make and also left with my jealousy and intense sexual desire. I hated her guts and mine, with sincere shame all weekend, and wanted her body just as badly.

A few days later my father returned home and I knew what I had to do. Her attempts to tease and arouse me by viewing gorgeous adult flesh as a reward for keeping my mouth shut would never work, because I somehow still loved my father. Within minutes after telling him all that I had seen, she was attacked, beaten and exposed. She would also return the favor.

After several days and maybe a few weeks had past, you could still cut the air with a knife. So I found myself more and more down in the basement trying to entertain myself during the rainy days. Glancing over at my gun rack bolted to the brick wall, I was horrified at what I was seeing. All the barrels of just my weapons and rifles had now been bent and twisted beyond repair by someone seeking severe revenge. I was livid with anger and just as livid to inform my father. But I would never make it out of the basement. Coming up now to the top step of hell I was greeted with a foot carefully placed in the groin of a fifteen year old boy, from someone with hatred and vicious revenge long coming. For the longest period of time I would lay on the bottom step, on the basement floor trying not to die. Until my father returned home that evening, I was left with blood through my urine and swollen with a black and torn groin. I was defeated for now, as both testicles had become the size of lemons. But I would not be silent. Once again my father would attack this imitation homemaker after he witnessed my injuries, but he showed more concern about his weapons and still refused to take me to the hospital. Once again she would also return the favor, but this time she was more discrete.

After several days or maybe weeks I was able to finally walk normal and started to deliver newspapers every morning throughout the neighborhood. My dog Bow was a great companion and friend during this time of dark and raining mornings, fog and fear. He was always there smiling and forging ahead. All he wanted me to do was love him and protect him, but I would fail. One morning, just as I came off of the back porch I was surprised to encounter my attacker and even more surprised to hear her say "good morning." In my shock and stupidity I politely said hello. Walking now over to Bow's kennel I prepared myself for the endless licking and kissing by my friend after removing his chain. His freedom became my reward and pleasure as he endlessly thanked me, by whining, licking and barking and sobbing for escape. How is it that you can love animals so very hard and deep? And so very final, for on this morning my dog Bow just laid

they're wagging his tail and smiling, but not moving. My horror and fear came from deep within as I screamed for my dog to respond as I awoke everyone for miles around. As I held his head and tried to encourage him to get up, I looked up and over at the kitchen window, just to see my father's wife pull back and hide her face behind the curtains. After some positive signs that he was getting better from drinking water, I set out on my bike to deliver my papers and complete my deliveries. Arriving home three hours later, my childhood now was gone forever. How can I describe to you my level of despair, anguish and severe sorrow. What level of sacrifice can I offer that would substantiate to you, my lifetime of loss and severe emotional pain. With fluid and mucous now draining from his mouth and his eyes closed forever, he had died from poison, given to him in his food with hatred and revenge. I held his head for several hours, as I was truly lost in the valley of Bow's death. Rocking his head back and forth, as if to console both him and me, I stared at his beauty, reviewed his behaviors of excellence in my memory of his time, and for hours, I wept, while staring up and watching her at the kitchen window.

I also would plan. That evening my father returned to a dead animal and to "dead" son. And he knew it. After several phony stories and lies from his vengeful wife, he believed her story that some neighbor was responsible. I knew better. The next day I was required to load Bow up in the back trunk of my father's car and soon thereafter, out in the country on some forgetful road, he was buried. Soon, the messenger with poison from hell would be as well. The next morning after my father left for work I returned to the basement of my attacker and my weapons and slowly loaded my father's shotgun. These barrels were straight and true. Climbing the stairs of the damp cellar I still held the weapon on guard, at chest level and for groin protection. Arriving now at the upstairs of her bedroom, I slowly opened the door and removed the safety off my shotgun trigger as I prepared to send her to hell, or worse. Walking over to the bed, with the barrels now full of twenty-gauge buckshot eager to deliver in kind, I pointed the barrels downward towards the pillow. Just as I fingered the trigger, I finally realized one thing. She was gone, heading somewhere, someplace, for several days, after I swore on the grave of my dog. "You will die for this." So this Winthrop slut, this Methow tramp, was gone for now, out of my life and sight, at least for a while. Again, she has no idea how close she came to leaving permanently.

The one most troubling and heartbreaking events of this entire time was when I became sick. Not just sick, but deathly ill. The newspapers in Seattle had run front-page headlines stating that the city sewers had been draining, for a long period of time, into Green Lake where I swam as often as possible. I became so ill, so feverous and congested, that I briefly became comatose. For over two weeks, while everyone in the house went to work or went shopping or drinking, I laid there, slowly dieing, with very little food and only water, fighting to recover from this killer. I also lay there fighting, to keep loving my father. At last, after over two weeks in bed and ten pounds lighter, my health and strength would return. My love, respect and trust in my father would not. I would also never again, eat any food, or drink any liquid, or candy, served by this stepmother of horror. For then and now I believed my illness and near death was caused by poison or severe bacteria implanted in my food. Too many symptoms were severe and her deliberate exit and now friendship didn't add up. There lack of any concern for my health, body weight, or appetite, for over two weeks spoke volumes for my safety. The witch of Okanogan had almost succeeded.



Fish - Whiskey - Fear

Great Fisherman
Absent Abusive Father



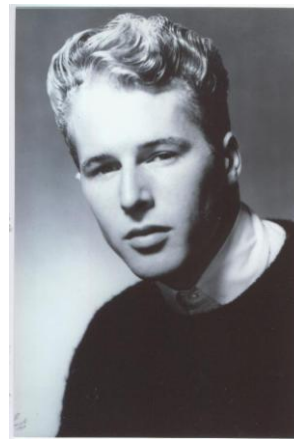
Always Alone
Hick's Lake, Fish & Girls



Bow – Goodbye my friend



Boot Camp 1960



1961 – 18 and headed for life



August 29, 1963 – Wedding Day
My Edna. God what a beauty.

Many, many years later with my family on a Sunday car ride, I would somehow be drawn or delivered straight to north Seattle, around Green Lake, up the hill off old 99, to the corner house of 8003 Linden, like an ocean tide of evil commanding me with fear and retaliation. Parking beside the curb for a minute as I stared at the unkempt yard and yellow lawn, I felt the same fear, reprisal and responsibility of getting it mowed quickly before they returned home with anger, booze and retaliation. I see the white sheets of my bedroom still hanging from my upstairs window, tide in knots like a climbing rope, for my midnight escape and possible freedom. I don't know how many nights I lay awake in that snake pit of horror, trying to maintain my fear and sanity and my love for my father.

Realizing now as I stared at the house, that someone on this day was painting the home inside and out with all the windows and doors opened, I removed myself from the driver's seat after asking my wife for a few private minutes. After my introductions to the painter and owner, I was allowed to explore throughout the house. Staring now at the upstairs bedrooms of isolation, stifling heat and near childhood death, I looked everywhere for their faces and almost heard their screaming and loud fights downstairs. Staring now at their bedroom, I delivered with my mind and hands two rounds of twenty-gage buckshot justice to the crudest, cruel, vicious and vulgar women alive, with a possible lifetime of imprisonment, or death to me would surely follow. The stench of alcohol, beer and daily whiskey now clouded my smell as I headed for the basement as if commanded.

Still there mounted on the brick chimney wall after all these years was the wooden gun rack of my lost and destroyed weapons so very long ago. In the corner, as my anger progressed, my mind could see all the numerous fishing rods and hunting gear, my father valued so highly over his family. Even then as I smelled the aroma of my father

and remembering the horrors of this basement, I still wanted to tell him how much I loved him. Walking up to the top basement step of my surprise attacker, I turned slightly around and stared back downward at the long deadly fall. I silently whispered. Try it now bitch. Finding myself now in the backyard, sitting on the back porch, I hear my dog, his barks and cries for attention and love, as I became flooded with tears and uncontrolled perspiration and emotion. Hello Bow. Do you know how much I love you? Do you know how much I cared? Give me a hug. That a boy. I love you my friend. Walking now towards my car and wife and children and grandchildren, I realized they had all saved me. I was long at last, free. But what do I know; I'm still only sixteen.

Finally back sitting in school class with my health fully returned, my loss of focus and concentration along with the heat and absolute boredom, made me feel at any minute I would explode in a rage. The fragrance of summer through the windows along with the constant distracting of my female classmates didn't help. God almighty should never have put so much beauty around one sixteen-year boy. I found myself turning my head to the window fearful my staring and thoughts would be exposed. Did they know how much time they were on my mind? Did they know? Did they know? And then I saw them, not the gorgeous girls of my class, but the authorities of law and order. Every school has its well-known local detectives for juveniles and I recognized our two at once. At other times I had seen them appear and very soon thereafter leave with a schoolmate between them, handcuffed, their heads hanging down in shame and fear. On this day between them walked my friend Woody. As all the class watched as they passed our window, I felt a fear and chill go through me that all at once screamed - RUN.

A few months before, Woody stole some keys and broke into the many cars parked along the roads at night. Soon, in all his wisdom and youth, he discovered a nightly paper-route in the coin boxes of all the corner newspaper stands. He was not only getting rich but he was very eager and willing to make me rich as well. For a young man with only fifty cents to his name I was to recognize this invitation as a tremendous business opportunity. It took only a few hours to fill every pocket I had and a few minutes more to realize I was in big trouble. I broke into homes several times for food, had numerous fistfights and even rode in a stolen car or two for joyrides. But this was different. This was grand theft, big time, jail time, for a long time. As I walked home along I slowly emptied all my pockets of every coin I had and promised myself NEVER AGAIN.

Woody called over the next few months and I gave him several reasons why I wasn't allowed to go hang out around his house. I knew I had to distance myself from him and the huge barrel of coin he had almost filled.

Now in flight and midair over several rows of desks and chairs and all the beautiful women I had so admired, my mind had concluded the detectives were here so Woody wouldn't be all alone in this wave of crime and prosecution. So Woody wouldn't be all alone at Green Hill Reformatory for the next five years. As the classroom door opened they were looking for one person only. ME. As a student in class I had only received C and D grades and I would never be considered a future scholar. But as an athletic and survivor of years of sever neglect and abuse I had become a fighter and I could run like HELL. On this day of summer I would call on all my courage,

determination and physical ability, to distance myself from my classmates and imprisonment.

For the next several hours I would race, sprint and fight this determined officer of the law for my freedom. I would cover over 45 miles in 24 hours of running, hitchhiking and praying no one would hear my heart beating while hiding. During the daylight hours I worked myself through all of north and south Seattle heading for White Center. All the time this determined officer of the law pursued me until dark. When I hitchhiked and opened the car door, he was there. When I entered the Aurora Tunnel, he was there waiting at the other end. As this grown man struck me I would again acquire the speed and strength to fight and flee once again. While running I climbed down over eighty feet of drainpipe hanging over the waterfront viaduct. After he drove away I climbed back up this same pipe to hitchhike, run and hide.

Finally at mid morning the next day I had made it to my mothers. After twenty-four hours of running I was safe for a while. I called upon every pound of my body and all reserves of my strength and determination to survive. They would never fail me. But I had no way of knowing that my journey had just begun. I decided to sleep in my neighbor's yard beside the picket fence, deep inside the raspberry vines. That evening, up drove my two determined officers of the law. My mother didn't know my whereabouts or my predicament and soon they left, promising to return. Very early the next morning after giving my mother a story that would have made a drill sergeant cry I received some money, a little affection and true worry and sadness for my future and safety.

I headed east over Top Hat, through Tukwila and on to Renton. I waited several hours for a train, any train to escape my past and cultivate my future. On this day, June 7, 1959, my classmates would be graduating from Junior High. Enjoying the status of the day and the fulfillment of their completion. I would be sprinting as fast as all the races I had ever run, leaping with arms extended to finally grasps the ladder of freedom of Northern Pacific Hog Car #1. My escape was complete. I was broke, hungry and a running fugitive. I would never see a junior or senior prom, or graduation. But I was free.

For the next two days I would break free of Washington and Idaho and end up in what is now and then called Big Timber, Montana. For food and shelter I began my adult life working as a dishwasher, a mill logger and construction laborer.

Soon I found myself hired as a ranch hand and imitation cowboy. The pay was five dollars a day plus room and board. The repair work on many miles of fence-line was very hard, very hot and sometimes very lonely. I had no way of knowing this line of work would give me the discipline, grit and staying power that would carry and support me the rest of my life. No way to know the stamp on my heart and soul that Montana would bring. Within a few weeks I would be ordered to saddle-up, move out and explore all the rangeland the eyes could see. Every gully or canyon or creek would be ridden for the hundreds of cattle and calves this vast open prairie could produce.

Having no experience with horses or cattle, I soon found a comfort and harmony with the animals and a calm and peace within myself. I had run and fought to escape my

captors. I had ridden the rails through the loneliness of hell. Now where great tribes of American Indians once rode and only a few hours ride from where I daydreamed, had slaughtered the Seventh Cavalry, I rode herd, drag and point and would come to realize the long hard journey, was changing me forever.

I arrived here for a reason. Any fears, of the elements or my enemies, for now were gone. Riding beside me on my left rode The Lone Ranger. On my right was Roy Rogers. To my back and flank rode Hoppy and Gene. All the men of the 10 cent movies of the Saturday matinees were there as pals, teachers and guardians. My classmates would be swimming, cruising and partying, without a care in the world. I would be on horseback riding drag on a roundup so big you were not able to see the front of the herd. Many years later I would look back on this time as the avenue of direction for most of my life. I hardly recognized this new and changed "Man of the Plains".

Unfortunately, the ranch owner decided I didn't live up to the Top Hand that I believed I was in his saddle. My new assignment was calf and corral work for branding, shots and castration. It would be hot, dirty and dangerous and very shitty work. Before the day was finished I would be covered with cow/calf manure from my boots to my new hat. It was during this time that I would first observe the seniority and pecking order of my fellow bunkhouse hands. Work assignments were by age and ability. Outsiders and youth had no status. It was also here on this day that I would again have to confront my biggest fear. While loading calves into the branding shoots I was kicked hard enough to be knocked unconscious and received a badly broken nose. They packed my nose and finally the bleeding stopped. I was told to stand by and rest and later I would be taken to the doctor in Big Timber 50 miles away.

While I stood by and rested, I decided to climb the giant rock formation behind the corrals to get a better picture of this huge roundup and adventure. The rocks were smooth enough, but very steep as I found out as I slid forward on my chest. Little did I realize the danger that was waiting? Just as I raised my head to regain my balance, a rattlesnake with fifteen beads, 4 1/2 feet long, green in color struck out. The head of the snake was so close to my cheek, that I felt a small gust of wind pass my face. As the snake struck again, I jerked back hard enough to start my long fall all the way down the rocky hill. I now had a broken nose, bleeding head and a shock so violent I could do nothing but bleed and sob. Years later in the US Navy and Army I would witness grown men in fear and danger sob and reel the very same way. I would never feel ashamed of weeping again. The lack of steady food, boredom and isolation, along with insubordination on the first week of July would get me fired. With a pocket full of money and a heart full of lust, I soon found myself on the streets of Big Timber, taking odd jobs riding horses, playing cowboy and trying to meet every girl in Montana. It was a summer of complete intoxication.

I arrived on Friday morning in Big Timber after the ranch owner saw to it that I received transportation and back pay. Almost at once I felt intimidated and regretful. After a few hours of doing little of anything, I found a new job as a farmhand and laborer. I had almost three days to run, explore, frolic and fish. Yes, fish.

Coming to town from the corner of my eye I spotted it. Crystal clear deep pools of blue adventure. It was easily a city block wide, in places it was very deep and ran all the way to the Missouri River. With all the fragrance and foliage of summer and a sky so vast and blue I finally stood on her shoreline and called out, "Hello Yellowstone." I had heard of this river all the way back in Seattle. Old photos from friends and braggarts soon found their way down to the youngest and smallest of fishermen. My eyes and ears after seeing pictures of trout as big and as long as your arms opened wide and clear to absorb every fish tale and every location. I had fished the deep and swift rivers of Washington as a young man with my friends John, Stan and Billy. After hitchhiking to the river we would fish all day with very little food and finally, exhausted, hitchhiked home, fishless, defeated and starving. But we never quit. I wanted so badly to call out to all of them to have them beside me on this glorious day, fishing, laughing and puffing the symbol of adulthood a Camel cigarette.

For the last five years my friends and girlfriends had become my family. The divorce of my parents had left me alone day and night and hungry day after day. The support of my childhood friends gave me food, warmth and security. On this day in July of 1959 I would be for the first time fishing the Yellowstone River alone.

Even the deep swift currents, rattlesnakes and loneliness would not be allowed to intimidate or defeat me. At that moment I arrived, excited and eager to cast my line from a borrowed fishing rod and half dozen worms. Flies and lures were out, as fishing the bottom with bait seemed simpler and possibly more enticing for these classic fish called German Browns. After casting out into the deepest calm waters of this Montana treasure with my rod supported by a branch in the sand, I laid back mentally storing, to protect the moment, the river and my time and to hold on to everything for my future tales of fish that had come and gone and courage that I displayed but always had to cultivate.

No sooner than I sat down, I slowly began to see my father. Old boats and fishing gear, whiskey and always the rough and dangerous waters of the Puget Sound. Before I was able to use the toilet on my own, my father had me up in the bow of a 16' Kicker boat, chasing salmon across the Sound and the Straits of Juan DeFuca. His lifetime hobby of fishing every sea, ocean, lake or stream with a fishing rod in one hand and a bottle of Old Crow whiskey in the other, would create love, respect, admiration, humiliation, pain and defiance. I was aware, always, that I was expected to endure the freezing cold rough seas and a very stern overseer. Any mistakes by me on sea or land would be followed by such loud screaming, anger and profanity that I learned to fish with half my heart, but all my mind and ability. I was forever, until my mid-teens, petrified of my father. For many days behind my house I would practice casting my line from bait-casting reels that were awkward, heavy and prone to terrible backlash. If this happened at sea I could expect a verbal lashing that sometimes carried all the way back to shore.

On my 15th year of summer on a little lake outside of Winthrop Washington it would happen for the last time. We had only been fishing on this morning for a short while. After laying my fishing rod down against the oarlock I grabbed my new spinning rod to double fish and display my skills and joy for this exciting day. Almost at once my fly rod, cradled against the oarlock, snapped up from beneath my legs. On this day when one of the biggest trout's that ever should visit my line aggressively struck I was not

ready. The drag on the reel was set on firm to not allow any line to disperse or allow any relief in pole pressure. As quick and elusive as wind passing your face, one 9 foot Wright and McGill glass fly rod attach to one Pflueger Medalist fly reel all attached to a trout that all fishermen pray for was on the bottom of the lake. The explosion of anger, profanity and shame was instant. No one on the lake that day would escape the screaming, swearing or humiliation directed at me. My desire to swim ashore was great, but the distance was just too far. I would sit for hours that day in anguish and pain. I mourned the loss of a valuable fly rod and the love and camaraderie of my father. We would never fish together again. Many years later at his funeral my father would find not one blood relation to say goodbye. The effects of lasting childhood hunger, family abuse and desertion, and his years of alcoholism, divorce and unemployment finally had taken their toll.

Sitting then on the river over 1000 miles away from everyone I loved one year later, I found myself reaching for his or her understanding and approval. I also found myself focusing, concentrating and savoring this Montana treasure known as the Big Y. The rod and reel I was given to use that day was made of bamboo with a small Shakespeare bait-casting reel. I loosened the drag on the outside cap of the reel knowing with only six worms my casting and fishing would be limited. The spool of line now would free spin with very little effort. It would backlash with even less. I spent maybe ten minutes casting my line without any bait, slowly adjusting the drag, fine-tuning my thumb on the spool. A backlash here would stop the day and subject all of Montana to my father's fury over 1000 miles away. But after years of casting in freezing, rainy, snowy weather, I had mastered this skill very well.

After baiting the hook I decided to cast like I had done since childhood. My line went straight and far landing on the deepest pool halfway into the river. On this first cast with a firmly baited hook, I waited. No more then two minutes passed when a clear and distinct sound behind me went off. Two rattlesnakes separated by fifty feet in the tall river grass, hissed and rattled back and forth running a chill and fear throughout my spine. I turned my shoulders 90o watching half my fishing and half my terror. Their alarm spread to every snake making it clear, I was not welcome. I was in danger and leaving would be difficult. I constantly scanned the grassy shoreline with my right eye for threats as my left eye focused on the rod tip for movement.

On this day I must be firm I would not be intimidated. For the longest period of time I sat waiting with excitement, anticipation, fear and terror. Finally exhausted, sweaty and tired I stood up to stretch breath and defend myself. After at least three hours of dedicated loyalty to that river and that worm I was finished for the day. Before I removed my pole from the branch in the sand I walked maybe 15 feet to the grass behind me to make my escape plan and exit. The very second I turned my head back to the river the tip of this rustic old wooden bamboo pole hit the water line so hard that the branch holding the rod in the sand split right down the middle. Immediately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the borrowed pole was in the river and the rest was on the way. With a flying leap I ran and dove toward the shoreline seeing flashbacks of one year before on a small lake with my father and my loss of dignity and pride. Instantly I was half way underwater grabbing my pole like a lifeline to redemption. Clawing and digging my way back to shore holding the line in one hand and the reel and pole full of sand and dirt in the other. The fight was on, as I

said out loud “never leave your fishing rod unattended, never!” And then the fish ran, taking out line by the second. My drag on the side of this old outdated reel had been set on very light and even with sand and dirt covering the spool, honorably allowed fast flowing freedom for this still elusive and running Yellowstone River treasure.

Feet and then yards of old Black Cat cut line raced off the reel deeper and further down the river. I knew with a little thumb pressure on the spool I could slow the loss of line, but also break my leader attached to the hook attached to the fish. Slowly as I walked down the shoreline, I gave very little pressure with my left thumb, knowing I had no choice for the line was almost gone. My reel full of dirt and sand would not retrieve. Walking ever so softly applying thumb pressure, slowly he stopped. With my left hand holding the line and right hand holding the pole I began the long journey of retrieving all the line by hand. The bait-casting reel full of sand and mud, with all the line now in the river, had done its job. “Oh my God!” I yelled when for the first time a German Brown Trout surfaced showing his size and anger. He was huge. Holding my rod tip high I very carefully stripped the line into the shape of an oval between my legs storing inventory for future runs. With maybe fifty feet of line brought in, he ran again. But this time not as hard or as far.

Just as I started to relax, a rattlesnake right behind me went crazy with anger. Rattling and alerting all the rest. They were everywhere, as I now stood right beside the water keeping my distance from the grass behind. My encounter, face to face only a few weeks before with certain death was very fresh on my mind and so were the nightmares. Stripping in line and again having it taken away slowly back out walking down the shoreline, I began to win as I closed the distance between the fish and me. Finally after at least as long as half an hour, this Montana Trophy was before me. I could not believe my eyes. The gods of the Yellowstone River had seen to it that on this day their biggest and best German Brown Trout attacked giving me a second chance to redeem myself. Again I was not ready and this time I also had no net.

The one thing I was not able to find or borrow in town was fish nylon net to reach out into the river with for a secure catch. Many a good fish has been lost from spit hooks, broken leaders and no net. Ever so slowly, ever so softly, I escorted my prize right to the sandy shore. With rattlesnakes hissing behind me almost in protest I jumped into the river behind this nearly defeated treasure and scooped up with my arms, striking the fish onto the dry beach. Leaping again I now straddled the fish, holding his head with my hands. I had won. Without a doubt the largest German Brown that ever swam the currents of the Big Yellowstone River had been caught. They could hear me scream with boisterous glee all the way to Washington State. “YESSSSSSSSSS, YESSSSSSSSSS, YESSSSSSSSSS!” With great relief from my victory, I was also very pleased to see a wide sandy trail leaving the river up the bank. With the tail of the fish dragging in the sand and me holding the head, I sprinted up the trail fearful at any minute the snakes would strike out or the path of freedom should suddenly close up. Standing now on the highway looking down on the river, I knew on that day I had stood up against all my fears. I also knew I had forever broken free from the shadow of my father. My heart took a picture and I knew I would never forget this day.

Later on that afternoon I gave the fish away as a gift of gratitude to the woman who ran the bakery. Her directions for new employment, her polite softness and concern for me were always greatly appreciated. Whenever I was in town, I would seek her out for conversation and friendship. She reflected all that was soft and caring in Montana. Today I only remember her as Phyllis. I found myself walking throughout town seeking friends my own age. It was the Fourth of July weekend and the town was very busy. I realized that no matter whom I talked to or what I did in town; I could not escape the feeling of homesickness and loneliness. It would be a long night.

On my first Saturday while entering the minor section of the Grand hotel, I heard laughter in the back corner of the room. Looking over, my eyes came upon such beauty and presence that for the first time in my life I was speechless. This country girl of 16, who rode horses, wore Levi's and had the freshness of Ivory Soap, now sat in the booth beside me, holding court with her girlfriends and smiling. What can I say? What can I do that would give me the status and privilege of her company? Now watching her, watching me, we both smiled, embarrassing not only her friends but also the words I hadn't even spoken. Finally after forever I was invited to join them. After several minutes of conversation her friends said goodbye.

For the next several minutes, days and months she would own my heart and be in all my daily thoughts. How many nights out on the prairie, in the back seat of that old Hudson Hornet Sedan we spent, I do not know. There is a time in every boy's life when he is given the privilege, the sacred opportunity to have a mind-branding encounter with a girl. To become so intimate, so personal that nothing before or after this brief episode of life could ever change it. There is a place around the neck of most girls where the hairline of satin and fine meets her shoulders of caress. Where the cotton softness of her skin and mouth sends us as boys and men a message of approval, acceptance and desire.

There is also a place on the Montana prairie that would bare witness so long ago in the black of night, to young unclothed dancers, a radio softly playing and a place and time that was never forgotten. Some call this childhood event, desire or lust. I would forever call this time in my youth, passionate healing. Holding her then in my arms, I felt honored and complete.

Around the last week of August she informed me her family would be going camping for two weeks in the Yellowstone on the Madison River. Many hours after we said goodbye, I returned to the logging camp, high in the hills where I had found part time work. And so began at this time and place my greatest and most horrific childhood adventure.

The long army surplus tent where we slept had a stove at the entryway with over forty cots in a line. High status employees, rows one through ten, were where loggers received both heat from the stove and admiration from the crew. My bed arrangement was an overly used sleeping bag on the ground as far from the stove as you could get. I became #41 in line at the far end of the tent. In the early morning hours with winter already showing, my end of the line became a frosty no mans land. I learned to sleep in my clothes for added insulation and completely cover my head to protect it from the frost. Now if I could just stop shaking. Far in the distance I could hear the sound of a train coming. Not remembering any tracks or trains in the area I tried not to shiver or shake. I

held my knees close to my chest and sent my mind far down the mountain to hold and embrace her once again. Her fragrance now was captured and held even in this soiled sleeping bag of yesteryear. My head and ears were flat on the ground as I started to receive a message of the eminent future. The ground was starting to kick back at my head. I wasn't cold, but I was shaking and the train kept coming and coming until finally it hit loud and very hard. My entire body now rolled so violently that I began to slide from beneath the tent. Screams began, "Earthquake!" "Oh my God!" and cries from grown men screaming "Mommy, Mommy!" weeping aloud.

Before it hit me, I recognized with my body so close to the ground that all the trees around me were now falling, like God was very angry. I also felt my soul and life were completely out of my control. Somehow I found my body curled around the main tent pole. As I hung on I heard the cries of all the adult loggers up in rows one through ten. The growl and roar of this violent shaking centered in these mountains was beyond description. I felt that I was captured and imprisoned by its strength and mass. For at least two minutes I held on, finally hearing the roar go over the mountain, but continuing with the vibration. Ever so slowly I sat up and opened my eyes. Suddenly, everything was quiet except for the men. The panic, screaming and crying throughout the tent immediately showed some grown men at their best and some at their worst. Some showed leadership and strength, some showed cowardness, self-preservation and phony courage, after weeping for their mothers. There were several. Slowly the men now seeking the safety of the outside, emptied the tent. For the next several hours over forty men stood firm around the brightest campfire ever made. Some in long johns, some in clothes, some with messed underwear standing down wind and some still nude. After several aftershocks and dozens of bullshit stories by several leaders and phonies, daylight came like a long lost friend. I had survived.

The owner soon informed us that all work and logging would be shut down. After removing several trees from the sleeping area we started the long journey down the mountain. What normally would have taken maybe a half an hour to get to the highway, now took over three hours of cutting trees and rolling rocks all by hand. Finally, exhausted and very tired from the lack of sleep, I leaped up into the back box of a Model T Ford pickup. As we came to the asphalt two lane road, I remembered closing my eyes and resting my head against the cab. We had not gone over two miles when the driver slammed on the brakes. As I stood up I observed all the power and horror of this terrible earthquake.

The entire area had been shaken so violently that more than half the mountain had slid across the valley floor. There was now a wall, at least thirty feet high, across the road and the river that was now dry. I realized now the sounds that came through my body as I laid so close to the earth last night, were coming from this valley floor. For the first time in my life I was witnessing personnel death and I didn't even recognize it. After several minutes of horror, fear and relief we started back the other direction knowing it would take several hours. It did. Finally late at night I arrived back in Big Timber, filthy, hungry and broke, but I was alive.

Having not heard from my girl for over two weeks, I hitchhiked up to Livingston to say hello and fill my heart. Before I could ring the doorbell a man carrying furniture

walked out and proceeded to load the truck. I believed at that time he was their landlord. He explained to me that the entire family and many others camping on the Madison on that night at 11:30 PM had perished. The mountain above their campsite came down and covered almost the whole valley. I believed in his words, as I covered my face with my hands, leaning now against the back door of an old Hudson Hornet. I was completely void of any composure, strength or embarrassment. I would never feel her breath, her body or smell her fragrance again. I had never felt such pain. For a long period of time, with the landlord consoling me, I shook and wept so deeply that my eyes had almost swollen shut. I also found, like a child, I had lost control of my urine. Later that day while riding back to Big Timber, I kept reaching out for her face and voice and wanting to hold her so very badly.

Please come back to me for I am not ready for this kind of pain again. Allow me just once more to tease the Montana ski, with our nudity, desire and innocence. Present yourself just one last time to deliver your message of youthful beauty, desire, loyalty and the purity of Ivory Soap and healing. But she would be gone forever. Today in Montana on the Madison River there is an area they call Earthquake Lake, where many campers had died. I shall forever be haunted by the Yellowstone.

For the next four months, I had no direction or stability, wandering from town to town with very little promise and even less food. My weight had now dropped below 125 lbs and the Montana cold was becoming a bitter enemy. I had been surviving on little wages and meager savings and again, seeking refuge at night through the fire exit of the Grand hotel, to steal a room or bath. Looking now in the mirror at a skinny, frail body that only a mother could love, I recognized I was in trouble. After finding some part time day work, on the day before Christmas, my foreman invited me to spend Christmas Day with his wife and him, out on their ranch. On this day of 30 below zero, I would find a present under their tree, ice skate on their pond and eat Canadian goose. For the first time in a long time someone was asking if I had enough food to eat, a warm place to sleep, or if I was safe and staying out of troubles way. For the first time in a long time someone cared. Their invitation almost overwhelmed me as I recognized a home full of love and security. Bob Elgas, my foreman, would show me how to exercise and muscle up. I received a strong warning on my lack of education and life's preparation. As I enjoyed the warmth and love of their home, I recognized a longing and ache for my own. I would never forget their kindness.

My summer, fall and winter of 1959 had come to an end. Finally on a Greyhound Bus I again returned to Seattle to confront my future. I left all the things that were good and decent in Montana. I arrived broke, hungry and horseless. But I built a foundation inside my soul and memories that would years later carry support and strengthen me. Very soon, with my old friends and classmates around me, I realized we had nothing more in common. I observed boredom, immaturity and frustration. I had ridden the vast plains of cattle country, worked the hills of logging and felt the hard labor of construction. I had felt the softness of a woman and the pain and finality of her death.

Three months later, on March 14, 1960 at the age of seventeen, I joined the US Navy. I left behind my pursuers, friends and enemies. I would be gone for over seven years and returned only once during this time. I would never see any of them again.

The Navy would send me to the Island of Bermuda in the Atlantic Ocean. Months later I would meet and eventually marry the island girl of my dreams. I met my wife while on weekend liberty, in the little town of Hamilton, while I was based on the island at the Naval Station. At that time, the town had many small gift shops selling souvenirs to the travelers and tourist, providing an English flavor and atmosphere of old England.

My friend Jerry and I would travel throughout the island searching for any and all entertainment that the sailors of the deep sea could enjoy. Traveling throughout every parish we road motorcycles to each and every beach. We went swimming on some of the most beautiful shorelines of white sand and water that I could only describe even today as Baby Blue. With Palm Trees all around us and nine months of tropical heat a year, you would think that being stationed here would have been heaven. You would be right, except for one or two things. Both WWI and WWII had delivered thousands of sailors and Marines from their ships to every tavern, pub, shop and beach throughout the island. These men also had chased, pursued and impregnated many a good daughter or wife and pissed off many a good father or son. In short, they hated our guts. After a few altercations with the locals, we recognized that we were not welcome. It didn't stop us though. We had to continue to seek out any and all female company that would at least talk or socialize with us. And so it was, I found myself unwelcome, hated and threatened, while we did everything possible to pursue, marry and impregnate every girl, women or wife on the island.

One day on a Saturday of winter as I entered the gift shop called Mukey's, I saw her standing behind the counter, waiting on some tourists. She displayed even then the laughter and sense of humor that I have seen for over 45 years. Then as she turned my way and walked towards me, I witnessed the figure of a woman that was over 6000 miles away. With long Auburn hair, big eyes, a small waist and a bust line that most women would kill for. She was gorgeous. Standing only five foot tall, she reflected all her Portuguese and Spanish heritage and at the same time it gave her an Italian look and appeal. She had the longest and most beautiful hair that even today makes her look like she is still 17. Well maybe 21. Her ability to make all the customers feel welcome and special was not lost on the sailors and marines that were being treated like street bums or worse. The competition for her company, by 5000 military personnel and some foreign tourist was endless. I have never been bashful or shy and competition was a way of life, but I had no way to stand out. I had very little money for entertainment, no car, no officer status and I also had to compete with the constant interruption of customers and military personnel trying to win her favor. One day in the little restaurant called the Parakeet, she walked in with her friend for lunch. With out interrupting her meal, all I could do was stare. Finally, she had enough and let me know by calmly yelling out, "Please sir, stop staring at me." I did and would for a while.

For a few weeks, my friend Jerry and she dated, while I sat stewing and biting my time. Friendship and loyalty in the military was forever, at least I thought so. After a number of weeks they stopped seeing each other. I couldn't get to town fast enough to see her and make a date. At last with her by my side, we went to the movies, cruised the island riding small bikes and many times off to the beach, to swim or just hang out. "Oh my eyes, don't fail me now," I kept repeating as I watched her come across the sand in a

full black swimsuit and a European's figure that took centuries to create. My God! How did I get so lucky? I even recognized in a fog that she not only could swim, but also was very athletic. And swim we did, up and down the shoreline of Elbow Beach, today one of the most exclusive beaches in the world. Many months later, wrapped up in our love and passion for each other, we would do things in those waters that changed the tide and sent many barracudas and sharks on their way shaking their heads with embarrassment.

Being only seventeen at the time, we were both locked in youth, passions and lust, but even I, an immature sailor, with way too many hormones, could see one other very important thing. Her treatment of animals big or small, from a cat, to a dog, to a duck, was always soft, loving and caring. Her loving treatment of children was inherited from growing up with eight sisters and brothers. She had a long history with a big loving family and understood the love that only a child could return. Beyond all the beauty that she possesses, even today, this is still her finest quality. In 1961 she even was awarded the title of Sea-Bee queen at my Navel Station. She was a knock out. It would be many years later before I would recognize the two other things I love the most. Her incredible sense of humor and her ability to endure. Unfortunately during the years ahead, she would need both.

Since I had a girl off base, there was certain level of jealousy and backstabbing by some of my NCOs and so called officers. This resulted more than once in my base confinement and punishment. There were two officers in particular that throughout my four years in the Navy would deliver such a discipline. I also believe them to be homosexual or gay. They were just too friendly, too personnel and too willing to invite me and some others out to their beach bungalow off base. Fraternization by officers with enlisted men or women was then, as it is today, illegal according to the UCMJ or military regulations.

After three years on the base the CID or military police caught several men out at the beach bungalow involving inappropriate sexual behavior. They were arrested and court marshaled. My executive officer, Lt. SO and SO, along with several other men of my barracks, were given dishonorable discharges after some jail time. My new company commander or executive officer of MCB -7 Construction Battalion, was more discrete, but let his feelings for my looks and youth be known more than once. During that entire time, until my discharge, I surrounded myself with tough, fist swinging shipmates not only for support and protection, but to be witnesses. To this very day, if God almighty should deliver him to some social function and by chance I could recognize him, he would be beaten so bad that nobody would ever look at him again. He also would never put his hands on a kid or shipmate again. I believe today they call this Sexual Harassment.

Now I'm standing in a church in Pembroke Bermuda and it is September 29, 1963. I'm looking down the aisle at the future mother of my children. With a wedding dress she designed herself, she would display all the beauty, grace, maturity and love, of a Bermudian Island girl. For the next 45 years, she would never fail me. Throughout the years, whenever I was separated from her, I felt an attachment and bond that was not only strong, but also very painful. Every time she decided to leave me I know she had many reasons to do so. Thank God she came back. I have also found that through the trials of a

long union, I have acquired an additional type of love for my wife that I had never been aware of before. This love and concern bring a constant desire to oversee and guard her safety and well being. Sometimes to a fault. But she would never die on me. Not like the others. There have been several days throughout the years when I didn't like her, but not one day when I didn't love her and always want her.

One day before I picked up my wife from work, I parked on a little side road called Church Street, in Hamilton. A small building incased by high steel fencing, in the trees of holly and oleander and surrounded by a small park, was constantly calling me. I felt the strong invitation to enter, even to this day. The park was laced with all the colorful flowers, trees and scrubs of this tropical island. Sometimes my wife and I would lunch there. I was always aware that she wanted to share her food, even when we were dating and even when she had little to share. I would see this quality in her and love her even more. On this day, the allure and attraction became too much, as I entered the building and at that very moment I would see a small change in me that has lasted forever.

This building was the smallest library on the planet, with six rows of books on each side of the aisle and one little desk. The rows of books, some hundreds of years old, were priceless. Old journals, diaries and books with frayed and broken covers and with the aroma of mold and character, called out to me. I read about a Black Bermudian, in pain and dying, who wanted to go home to some place called Africa and his lifetime of slavery. Others wrote about hunger and poverty and living under the British rule of law. And deep into the private journal of a very old women from England, I read where she describes her constant pain and loneliness after losing all her family on a ship called the H.M.S. Titanic and her strong belief that she would be buried in the country of Newfoundland, directly beside her family members that froze to death floating in the Atlantic Ocean. The last thing that I remember reading was a true story of a woman that was still grieving after the loss of all three of her brothers and almost every man in her English Village that were fighting over in someplace called the Somme and Verdun France. From that day on, I treasured books on history, literature and the long and painful World Wars of Europe and throughout the world. I also would treasure any and all long enduring relationships and longevity.

Before I would leave the island of Bermuda, and for four years long of Naval Seabee duty with men that I would eat, sleep, and fight with, I would make three of my finest friends. Jerry Ball of Washington, Frank May of Pennsylvania and Nick Passucci of Michigan. Their friendship, their camaraderie and at times their protection, would always be in my memory. Jerry Ball would become a master stonemason, pool builder and successful contractor and today lives happily married in Las Vegas Nevada. Frank May, would become a construction electrician for over 45 years, married and retired in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania as a Master Electrician. Nick Passucci someone with the most pleasant of personalities and company, would go on to become a successful General contractor, constructing commercial buildings and homes throughout Michigan. All of us would be a daily reminder and reflection throughout our careers, of the military training, disciple, and Naval Seabee's foundation. They were the best of my teammates and shipmates and I would always have them in my heart.

During my seven years on the Island, I would experience reverse discrimination, black racial hatred and continuous Anti-American animosity. How quickly they forget,

places called Normandy, Dieppe, the Battle of the Bulge, Bellow Wood, the Shome and D-Day and the ten's of thousands of Americans, who had given their lives for freedom and liberty on this Island and throughout Europe. Shame on you! After seven years on the Island trying to survive in a rich man's paradise, myself and my wife and my two daughters left the Island and never returned.

Just as we were leaving the 707 Jet from Pan-Am airlines was taxiing to the far eastern end of the runway, I saw flashbacks of the last seven years and felt the tears and pain for an Island I would never see again. The very last thing that I looked down on was the landfill, the garbage dump of Kindley Air Force Base, where I had worked for the last two years. Two 400-foot canyons were created for all medical and hazardous waste, garbage, and anything the Air Force wanted disposed of. I was required to dump, and ordered to smash everything down with a D-6 Dozer. After lighting both canyons on fire we would wait a few days and then push all the cooled ash out into the ocean.

On numerous occasions I was directed to smash the 55 gallon barrels that were delivered to me. The liquid in the barrels were first emptied and drained out into the pits. Being curious and not quite that stupid, I read the tops of several dozen barrels to identify their contents. There was a three digit description painted on the tops of the lids; for instance a typical top had the numbers 2-4-D painted on top. The other two numbers, I cannot remember to this day. One more thing stuck out vividly; there was a painted ring, band or strip around each and every barrel. Some had a red stripe, some a blue one and some purple, or orange. After doing this work for almost two years, in street cloths and sometimes feeling ill, I look back on this time with horror. They called this herbicide a Dioxin and you may know it as Agent Orange, Agent Blue, Agent White and Agent Purple. Many years later I would severely regret this job, my exposure and the US Air Force's deceit and silence. In my opinion, there is at least 200 smashed barrels still buried on that shoreline. I have the photos to prove this operation existed and many years later, I delivered this proof to the Dept. of Veteran's Affairs and to the Commanding General of the US Air Force in Washington D.C.

We arrived in Seattle in the fall of November 1967. For a few years, things were very tough and we had very little of anything. Finally after getting into the Western Washington Operating Engineers Union for Equipment Operators, my income rose, as my wife and I began to acquire a home and land and even a new car, today a classic called a Plymouth Road Runner. Our life during this time was at last safe and a little secure.

Most people would have been content with the good money and seasonal work. But I wasn't most people. I was hungry for success, and yes, recognition and profit. So I started to pursue my future career as a possible helicopter pilot and US Army Aviator. For months I would study. Whenever the weather permitted, I'd take what money I had saved and head down to Boeing field for flight training. Fixed wing aircraft were very cheap to fly during this period, so I slowly started building flight time and at last I received my Private Pilots license around 1969. My big break came when the G.I. Bill, from the US government, offered to pay for all my helicopter training without any reenlistment or obligation. I was elated. Look out world here I come, as I flew all around the northwest and the Rocky Mountains building flight time and having a ball. I even

dive-bombed a nudist colony once, imagining my friends of my childhood days were sitting beside me in the cockpit laughing like hell. They were my family and friends from White Center and Rat City and I wanted them so very much, even then, to be proud of me.

On the first week of November 1970, I decided to fly out of Boeing field from Seattle after hiring a new flight instructor for dual flight training and hopefully Great War stories. My new teacher was straight out of the war in Vietnam, after graduating from the Air Force academy and flight school, at the top of his class. All the students in the flight hanger were quickly very impressed with the stories and tales of jets, bombers and aerial combat. Walking now from his new Corvette smiling over to the students, he was truly a pilot poster child for the U.S Air Force. From the top of his shoulders to his waistline, the flight coveralls he proudly wore, displayed all the badges and combat insignia of every fighter jet or bomber squadron he flew or belonged. All he was lacking on this day was his fighter helmet and the U.S. Air Force band playing the song "Off we go into the wild blue yonder." I was green with envy and almost worshiped the air he flew. I absorbed every tale of close calls, flying missiles, bogies and courage and his future job across the runway working for Boeing Aircraft as a test pilot and highly paid employee. I was still a green pilot and received very little training up to this time in instruments of flying, or multi-engine time.

With a private pilot's license now inside my wallet and a total of 35 hours of flight training, I was ready for the big time. All the other students stood in admiration and attention as we left the flight hanger walking to the aircraft. We proceeded to give this aircraft, which was the size of a Volkswagen with wings, the pre-flight of its history. Nothing was left for chance. Everything from fuel, to controls, to flight ability and history were covered. After forty-five minutes of lectures, brow beating and endless arrogance by this Vietnam Red Baron, I had just about enough. Finally we lifted off flying north and out over Seattle and Puget Sound.

The day was cool and bright and gave me instant pleasure as I obeyed every direction and order I received from this highly rated aviator. Seeing the rolled up newspaper he carried under his arm, I realized he was soon going to be reading while I concentrated on safe forward flight. After flying for almost two hours I informed him I only had the necessary funds for this limited time. His pre-flight lectures had consumed over forty-five minutes of real flight time and it now was time to head on home. His attitude and coldness made it very clear; he would not waste his time again teaching an ex-Navy enlisted man how to fly. The cockpit was now covered from dashboard to tail, with anger, friction and animosity. It was clear I was everything he resented, disrespected and found very much to be beneath him. In his eyes I was everything amateur, unprofessional, unskilled and unattractive. My social skills were also in question, as he would soon find out.

After entering the flight pattern of Boeing Field at one thousand feet and beginning my downwind leg, I was then ordered to execute or deliver a short field landing. My limitations and amateur ability directing this flight maneuver was clear and revealing. I definitely needed more training and dual instruction. What I didn't need was the rolled up newspaper striking my forearm hard, twice with force and anger, as he took

control of the plane for more mandatory and imposed flight instruction. After at least one more hour of dual instruction he even landed the plane. I was somewhere in the aircraft between livid and furious.

After walking into the flight hanger ahead of his newspaper and bullshit stories, I turned around just in front of the student classroom, as he entered, displaying that pompous, fighter pilot I have arrived attitude. With several future aviators as witnesses seated now in chairs and instructors directing the lessons, I body slammed the flight coveralls and fighter insignias of one of the biggest assholes that ever sat a plane. Once again he was slammed as hard as the first time as my words were heard throughout Boeing field. "Try to hit me now mother----- Hit me now," as I threw him towards the flight line and his parked Corvette. The disruptive explosion and anarchy throughout the student classes and flight operations were instantaneous. My violent behavior did not come from finishing schools, private academies, silver spoons or childhood privilege. I was lacking in money, wardrobe, social circles and high flight instruction. But I would fight, and often, sometimes with painful results.

I gave my explanations about that day to the flight school owners and surprisingly, I was allowed to stay. Strangely, we would never see him again. The very next day was the first day of November 1970 on a Sunday. I decided I would at least try to improve my limited flight skills and fly for three hours around Boeing Field doing "Touch and Goes" and trying to improve my short field landings and manners. I was about to become very humbled, but also crowded in flight and on this day, I would see and meet the grim reaper of the sky.

The tower made it very clear; I could fly around the flight pattern at Boeing field provided air traffic remained light and the weather remained clear. My call sign was 32 Julia and my aircraft was a feather, called a Cessna 150. After lifting off, I looked over my left shoulder at the rows of new 747 jets Mr. Boeing had recently built. My imagination ran wild as I remarked out loud, Stick around, your next as if I had some future prospects as a test pilot and year around aviator. I had a long way to go and on my own dime, with a wife and two kids, that was really dreaming. Although I had developed one thing that only hunger, poverty and fistfights could help me acquire. Determination. After starting my downwind leg I glanced over my left shoulder to see if another aircraft might be entering the pattern. A bright Cessna 182 was coming up fast as he entered the flight pattern behind me as I received permission from the tower to land. This airfield is referred to as controlled airspace, and an area where the tower controls all movements with a firm hand.

Even I an amateur pilot could see very quickly that a serious problem was developing. Coming up fast right on the tail of the 182 was a twin engine Mooney aircraft. Without first obtaining approach control approval, or even voicing his presence, he had arrived from Canada and was determined to jump right in line like he was landing at some moose lodge in Alaska. After turning on my base leg, I temporally lost sight of both aircrafts, but they were fixed in my mind as I kept looking over my right shoulder at there possible anger, cussing, fist waving or worse. Entering final approach my suspicions and my eyes would confirm for me once again, that death was very cold, ugly

and final. The twin-engine Mooney was now chewing at the tail section of the Cessna 182 with complete regrets.

Both aircrafts impacted. The Mooney started to cartwheel, wing over wing, tail over tail and straight for the light forest of Beacon Hill below. My horror and fears were instant as I prepared to land in shock and never fly again. Right before my eyes I would receive a visual lecture of neglect, recklessness, unprofessional flying and the deaths of three people. I would never forget it. The control tower now in disbelief and anger, announced we have just had a mid-air collision and commanded all aircraft to leave the pattern. Gladly I thought. But I would not be so luckily. "32 Julia, please fly around the pattern again and confirm aircraft crash location. Do you copy?" I did, but I didn't have to like it.

Flying downwind now at five hundred feet my eyes came upon a twisted, smashed and flayed beer can that once was a twin engine Mooney aircraft No. CF-DBR, formerly with three happy live flyers. Smoke now started to rise as the flames started to engulf the remains of the aircraft and the dead bodies. Fire trucks were there in ten minutes.

I was horrified and landed at once after giving my report to the tower. There on the runway off-ramp was the Cessna 182 aircraft No. N92711. With smashed tail and shattered ego somehow the pilot had managed to land this aircraft almost in one piece. Safely now parked on the runway, he finely discovered he was still alive. As I taxied by I realized he was in shock as he just sat there on the ground, bawling his eyes out. No one blamed him. Almost at once after landing I saw visions on the Hicks Lake of my childhood. I remembered all the dead bodies, Navel diving school and most of all, I remember the fear. Nine years before in the U.S. Navy Underwater diving school off a coastal shoreline of Florida, after a snake went right through my face, I experienced the same intimidation, horror and shock that I now felt. During my first enlistment in the Navy in the early sixties I also had witnessed an overseas, mid-air collision, with bodies literally falling out of the sky right before my eyes. Back then I let my fear overcome my ability, ambition and possible talent as a future Navy diver. This same fear, now years later on this day in November 1970 after coming so close to death on Boeing field, was now threatening my potential or status as a future professional pilot and possible year around provider for my family.

Looking back then in time, I would regret that day on my eighteenth birthday for the rest of my life as I quit and dropped out of the finest diving school in the world. The humiliation and pain of being a quitter would last for years. Even though this aircraft disaster was more personal and burning still, right in front of my eyes on Beacon Hill, I would not let fear or danger overcome my ambition again. After fueling up and having coffee and a small sandwich, I again was ready to fly. Taking off and climbing to around one thousand feet with fear and intimidation, I looked down at Seattle and commented, cussing out loud. "Not this time mother-----", as I continued to fly threw out Seattle and the rest of the afternoon. I would never quit at anything again.

Around September 1970, I finally received my commercial pilot's license and immediately set out to find my first job as a pilot. The vast majority of my training was in

helicopters with very little fixed wing time. I also had no jet or multi-engine time. The Vietnam War was still going strong, but I had a family now and reenlistment in the Army for more training was out of the question. Helicopter aviators and many qualified jet pilots was a dime a dozen during this time, so competition for each and every job was very keen. I also did not ever want to leave my wife again. So I started looking around the bottom of the barrel for any and all jobs where flying was required. After corresponding with a southeast Alaskan logging company for employment, I was tentatively hired as a pilot and part time equipment operator.

Landing a job so soon right out of flight school with my commercial license in hand, gave me instant confidence and instant anger and animosity from my fellow pilots and instructors. They had been flying through hell the last several years in combat and in wages. Most were salaried at around \$500.00 dollars a month and ten dollars for every hour they flew. Even construction paid more then that. I was always aware and conscious of the jealousy and animosity in the work place. Competition for jobs with a now terrible recession going on was intense. My instructors and so-called friends were now turning against me with a vengeance. It was time to move on.

After arranging to meet the owner of this company and my new employer up in Lynnwood WA, I packed my bags and drove north up old HWY 99 to find my future and success. Mr. Day had recently purchased a new Hughes 369.HS turbo-jet helicopter down in Los Angeles and arranged to pick me up north of Seattle, Washington and fly on to Alaska. After arriving at his landing site, I walked around the aircraft inspecting the helicopter like a kid looking at a new Schwinn bike with no money. I was a very green pilot and new it. I kept repeating to myself, God, I wish I had more co-pilot time. Each and every Army trained pilot receives around 300 hours of second seat or co-pilot time to build a firm foundation of knowledge and flight experience in that type of aircraft. This system of training delivers a pilot that is hopefully safe, qualified and experienced. He also tends to live longer. Flying helicopter is risky and dangerous work and there is no place for mistakes or unqualified pilots. Flying in Alaskan weather without co-pilot or instrument training in helicopters was downright suicide and unprofessional. And I knew it. I had shot my mouth off more than once to all my friends and any one who would listen, that Mr. Aviator was on his way up. Look out sky. Here I come, God what a mistake. I also had convinced my wife our future was flying, big money, big house and big ideas, with my big mouth. I had also convinced my new employer that 15 years in Heavy Equipment and Helicopter training was delivering to him someone who could do it all and still deliver change.

Through out the years I had the one ability to sense danger or have premonitions forthcoming. I also could spot a phony a mile away and my reflection off the windows of the aircraft was depressing the hell out of me. In short, my mouth had overloaded my skills and qualifications and there was no way out. Soon up drove my new employer, but surprisingly he was not alone. Getting now into the aircraft was his foreman and his wife and Mr. Day's wife as well. This left just one seat vacant for pilot in command, as I now looked bewildered and confused, holding my suitcase, I was about to get the education of a life time. Mr. Day had logged several hundred hours in fixed -wing aircrafts in Alaska and was floatplane rated as well. After receiving this jet helicopter in Los Angeles and the basic flight instruction of a few hours from Hughes Aircraft, all four passengers headed

north towards Alaska stopping now in Lynnwood for refueling and now having second thoughts of hiring any pilot. After clumsy explanations and excuses, I was offered a job as an equipment operator in Alaska, provided I could find my way north and the money for airfare. After casual conversation I was able to see and recognize I wasn't that unqualified and he was. And the pay was not anywhere what he first delivered or offered. My relief was instant as I sat in my Plymouth Roadrunner after declining his demotion and non-union wages and watched the rotor-blades sparkle as the aircraft lifted off heading north.

Looking now at all four of these faces staring back at me, I had not realized it yet, that I had once again beaten death. I sang out loud and happy all the way home to my wife and children and life. God I was so happy and relieved. Soon afterwards, I started each day by scanning the want ads for jobs, carriers and opportunities. Looking now at general and national news, I came across the story that I almost missed and the horror and fear I did not. One Hughes 369.HS, Helicopter No-N9139F in southeast Alaska was now on the bottom of Ketchikan Bay with three bodies still strapped inside. It seemed that the pilot was so involved with trying to inflate the float skids after engine failure; he lost control and hit the water very, very hard. In cold weather there is a locking pre-heater switch inside the aircraft that must be on at all times to prevent the intake of very cold air and ice developments internally, resulting quickly into engine failure. After the aircraft, bodies and debris were brought to the surface, inspectors found this locking switch was off, never giving the aircraft the opportunity to breathe warm safe air. I couldn't help but wonder, with the aircraft falling out of the sky, if the owner had any last regrets about the limited few hours of training he had, or his refusal to honor his confirmed employment, of one very well trained, instructed pilot. My instructors were some of the greatest U S Army combat pilots alive and I valued their teaching and guidance immensely. I also had acquired one thing every pilot of longevity values, Common Sense. Always know your limitations. On that day I did, as I politely declined sometime employment, risky non-qualified flying and death. I would never again overstate, or inflate my ability in aviation.

During the winter of 1972 - 1973, I received an offer from my brother-in-law from California for future flying and employment. The firm that he worked for as a mechanic, hauled freight and prison convicts throughout the state of California for trial or new imprisonment elsewhere. Still trying to build flight time for more credible experience and employment, I tried not to see the big hourly wages of \$1.75 an hour as a deterrent. Welfare paid more and construction was now in winter mode. So after being sworn in as a deputy sheriff for San Joaquin County, I received my two-minute training on pistol and handcuff use and my new sheriff's uniform and badge. In California, the Vietnam War had everyone hating the military and any and all law enforcement. I was no exception. Each and every airport we landed at brought looks and comments of severe hatred and animosity. I escorted many convicts throughout the state to the famous jails and prisons of California's, Folsom, San Quinton, Chino, Riverside, etc. and at each location I received the same reaction. But I was determined to build flight time and move up in the world. Perhaps I should say move up and down.

Our aircraft was a Cessna 206 single engine that held six personnel, convicts or pilots. Sometimes we had a female prisoner, which required another female guard. We had no way to determine which passenger was going to get violent or crazy, so everyone

was chained to the seat and handcuffed. After taking off from Visalia California, we climbed to 5000 feet heading south between Bakersfield and Van Nuys, California. I had no way to know it, but the military and I were about to get reacquainted.

With our eyes as big as silver dollars, two F-4 Phantom jets passed from our left to our right at the same altitude as us, but heading due west. They were required to be at 4500 or 5500 feet. Oh well, what's a thousand feet? As they streaked by us at mach something, we went right through their downwash and turbulence. Within seconds we were upside down and inside out and in deep shit. My pilot of command was Reggie, a man who had paid his dues long ago and knew every trick in the book. With the prisoners now screaming their lungs out and me maybe right behind them, Reggie kept the aircraft inverted and diving for maybe fifteen seconds as our airspeed climbed very fast. This was a passenger airplane, not an aerobatic biplane or God forbid a helicopter. Very quickly the wings could have fallen right off and I would have been gone to hell forever. Reggie's hands of experience, years of training and thousands of hours of flight time and confidence finally got the aircraft rolled over and under control so that everyone could at last breathe. Reggie had at last saved the day. Or did he? The smell throughout the plane delivered a message that was very clear. With messed pants from someone and wet pants from others, we headed further south greatly relieved. After landing in Chino with the temperature at 110 degrees, the aircraft had developed the stench of a thousand cattle stockyards. The things we do for success still amaze me today.

After reporting the near mid-air collision with the U S Military to approach Control and to the FAA, we landed in Riverside, California for relief, fuel and prisoner exchange. Each one had handcuffs on, with a chain around their waist, but no leg irons. They also were not chained together, only to the aircraft.

There was one convict that I worried about the most weighing around 280 lbs, with wrist so large, that we had to use special wide hand-cuffs just for him. I had not read his case history or his file yet, even though I had it in my briefcase. (Big mistake!) After escorting him, with one other guard, to use the toilet and washroom, I realized he had been the one who had messed his pants; and now was the source of the foul stench in the aircraft. The fear of flying and dieing, upside down by this man, had delivered a huge and dangerous rancid odor beyond description. With the other guard now watching and trying not to breath or laugh, I removed one of his handcuffs and handed him any and all paper towels for self clean up and wash. Finally in frustration and anger I removed the other handcuff and delivered my message of sever retaliation if he gave us any problems.

Even today as an old man, I still question my hollow threats, judgment and the stupidity of that moment. I then turned 90 degrees to exit the toilet and the clean-up, when I was hit, body slammed out the toilet door by this crazy naked man, as wide as a tree, hitting the basin sink and wall. The fight was on! As 160 lbs of small, held on to the neck of 280 lbs of stout and bull. With fear and more fear, I held on knowing the other guard would quickly be right there to help me get control of this confirmed and convicted killer. My attacker knew one thing that I had not known, nor seen. The other guard had exited the room temporarily not wishing to witness the cleanup or smell. Believing I had the common sense not to remove both handcuffs for any reason and knowing he was right outside the door. He thought I would be just fine cleaning someone's backside and

fighting for my life. This man, I would find out later, had taken a machete knife into a tavern and executed three patrons of the bar, after verbal insults were directed and spoken by the admirers of his wife. They would pay dearly that night for the crude and vulgar comments announced for all to hear and witness. I had never seen his wife or his machete, but was about to pay dearly as well.

With wide-eyed concern I realized that my savoir and assistant guard had exited the room and that my life was about to leave with very little fanfare or glory. Every little boy starting school in the first grade onward realizes very early in life, that when your opponent is bigger or tougher or meaner and you're about to be beaten severely, or worse, quickly embraced his neck, choke and hang on forever. On that day my strength, determination and complete fear would not fail me, as I closed my circle of arms smaller and smaller, until at last my naked attacker with out air or sanity, collapsed on the tiled floor, out cold and defeated.

After that day, I would never make the same mistakes again and I also would never again turn my back on a prisoner. Some time later, an F-4 Phantom Jet crashed into the same mountain ridge where we almost had a mid-air collision. One of those jets was piloted by Dino Martin. This was the loving son of Dean Martin the singer, actor and entertainer we all grew to love. Strangely, I even felt the loss and heartbreak of this fine young man.

Just before leaving California, during that last winter, I took my last flight south to San Diego and then back up to Ventura, Atascadero and San Louis Obispo. Reggie was flying with his wife, three prisoners and me. Even with a transponder on board for aircraft identity and direction, I could see the serious threat and likelihood of a mid-air collision with the many aircraft flying by both our wings. From San Diego to Los Angeles especially. After descending to 1000 feet on final approach to San Louis Obispo, I noticed the increased sound of wind and airspeed as the downdrafts of the cool Pacific Ocean winds drove the aircraft aggressively downward and delivered to us 999 feet less of altitude, airspeed and ideas. With our wheels almost hitting the top of the mountain we barely inched by with only a few feet to spare. Within 60 seconds we had been delivered to Heaven's Gate, then given a reprieve or pass by the converging hot and cold air and downdrafts. We'd been clearly reminded of our stupidity with both pilot and co-pilot error. Both our failure to maintain aggressive airspeed and steep approach only, had given this hot turbulent airspace the one opportunity to drive us right down into the mountain. On this day Reggie had no excuses and he offered none. My only thought was "I get \$1.75 per hour for all this fun and education?"

It was time to head on home with my wife, daughters and Seattle. Four years later my brother-in law Harold called with the latest bad news from California. Reggie, his wife and all the prisoners on a flight of death, had disincarnated in an Aero Commander 500A aircraft, flight # N6143X as they struck the top of a mountain and the water, in icing conditions, someplace, somewhere and somehow in Santa Barbara California. This was right around the same place where we almost hit the mountain a few years before. You would never find a finer pilot and gentleman than Reggie. But this time he just pushed his luck and the weather, too far. Only a few years later a Cessna 172 flying near

San Diego in smog struck the wing of a Boeing 727 and brought both aircraft to a fiery and terrible death killing 144 flyers. Sometimes my premonitions scare the shit out of me.

On January 1973 after years of hard work and sacrifice, I became a Flight Instructor in Rotorcraft. One of my first flights as a teacher took me over West Seattle. I looked down on the High Point Cemetery where my childhood friend of long ago was buried. I politely kissed her through the clouds at 1,000 feet and promised to always remember Stephanie Jane Anderson. Even at middle age I still would feel the pain and the loss of my childhood friend forever. Flying further south toward White Center and my old home near Hicks Lake, we hovered with the landing skids of the aircraft embracing the tips of the Lombardi's trees now over eighty feet tall. I embraced Hicks Lake for the first and last time by aircraft.

As I instructed my student to maintain a hover over the trees, I remembered every adventure, every friend, every song, every pain, this body of water had ever witnessed. I now found myself becoming angry. With cotton candy clouds above my head and endless blue skies beyond, all reflecting back down upon the water, I would at long last feel the very soul of this playground of my childhood. I began receiving a message as if the spirit of the lake and time had demanded to be heard. I was surprised to hear a woman's voice, the voice of the lake. I looked over at my student wondering if he could hear her speak, as clearly as I was now. He just smiled and turned his head away and continued to hover and concentrate. Staring now at her lips that were not yet moving waiting for the words to be spoken, my mind received her message of welcome, amazement at my survival and with a strong warning toward my arrogant attitude and obvious big head. After several years with numerous pompous pilots as friends, somewhere along the way I lost myself, my true identity and became everything then that I use to attack and resent. What a conceded asshole I had become as even my wife had been saying. I now looked over my shoulder to see whom the voice of the lake was talking to. "Sky King of Phony" had arrived and I was about to receive two lessons of a lifetime. Then I relieved my student of the controls, as if I was saying "Up yours" to the bastards of my past. I pulled pitch, nose down and streaked across the rooftops of Cascade Middle and Evergreen High School and I never looked back.

Later on that day, flying solo over Tukwila and South Center, I landed on the Helipad of the Double Tree Inn. I then walked around the aircraft displaying the attitude "Here I come to save the Day!" I looked down below to the asphalt parking lot and observed a young man and his beautiful wife staring up at me, smiling. His wheel chair and the fact that he had no legs from the knees down, instantly delivered a message. Last year he was everything I wasn't. He was US Army, a West Point graduate, an Army Aviator in Vietnam and was highly decorated. Here he was, with no legs, sitting before me and he just wanted to talk about flying. I felt like shit even to this day. They both displayed the class and courage that I would witness many times over during this period of my life. So many of my own classmates had already died in that war. God I was so lucky. After thirty minutes of their company and conversation, I fell madly in love with both of them and I would never forget their class or beauty. I was about to change.

It was during this time that I had solicited several banks from the Northwest to haul and deliver by helicopter, cancelled checks and computer work. Speed was a priority

rain, shine, or fog; safety on this day was not. I occupied second seat, riding co pilot to build flight time. My Pilot in Command was Dwight. He was an excellent pilot, US Army trained and on this day in the fog, he and I would both need all the training we had ever received. Working our way around Alki Point and the lighthouse, we turned on a heading of 270 degrees and searched for Bremerton. With thick fog above and beside us, we could still clearly see the blue of the water not 100 feet below.

Directly in front of us the sun was breaking through the clouds and fog, giving us a tunnel or window of passage across the Puget Sound. It's also called a Suckers Hole. And we took it. No sooner than we entered this avenue of daylight, the fog quickly embraced the aircraft and completely shut out all the morning, sun and visibility from the aircraft over the water. Dwight very quickly dropped the aircraft right to the surface of Puget Sound. We stared down 10 feet, to the coldest grave and horrors ever imagined. We were in deep trouble and both of us were old enough and smart enough, to see we were going to die a freezing violent death. Then instinctively, our training took over. With Dwight holding the aircraft command, he yelled for me to monitor the turn and bank indicator and directional finder. He said he would monitor the aircraft attitude, above the water and direction. He also said repeat any aircraft movement off this heading. Softly as if I was trying to keep a secret without yelling, I repeated the aircraft heading of 270 degrees every 15 seconds as we got deeper and deeper into this white crap. Goddamn, I'm scared. Damn it, damn it, damn it, I kept repeating to myself. Very softly, now I politely asked Dwight, "Please turn to the left slowly, please, until we get to 90 degrees on the compass, on our in bound leg. Please Dwight Now" As the aircraft slowly turned 180 Degrees.

Now, so close to the surface of the water that I could count the jellyfish, we slowly worked towards the shore of Alki Beach fighting fear and vertigo. With the waves now lapping not three feet from our skids and the daylight and visibility teasing our eyes and our aircraft, we exploded outward from the fog like an elephant giving birth. Hitting the shoreline of West Seattle, we finely regained our forward sight and direction. We were both exhausted and embarrassed, as we flew back to downtown Seattle in quiet. We both had pushed fate and luck a little too far and on this day almost lost.

A few days later, on November 4, 1974, after I was dispatched to run heavy equipment in South Seattle, I was informed of one Bell 47, B-2 model, Helicopter No, N5160B crashing off the coast of Kingston, Washington. Witnesses would testify that after take off, the aircraft flew up through a blue hole in the fog and thick clouds and almost at once was in trouble. As the helicopter flew upside-down, the pilot fought like hell to regain control. The rotor-blades then flexed upward with the aircraft now descending rapidly out of control, as it fell fast to the ground, aggressively cutting off the tail boom. The helicopter and the pilot were completely destroyed on impact. Dwight Brosseau had been my friend and teacher; and in the fall of 1974 he paid a terrible price. He also, did not have a co-pilot. I would never fly again as a civilian after that day, but several years later I would step up again for the U S Army and Washington Guard and give it one more try. I would also never again have the attitude of, "Here I come to save the Day!" God, what a carbon-copy phony asshole I was.

For the next 37 years through thick or thin, good and bad, my wife has tolerated and endured my many faults. She has always supported me in all of my fruitless endeavors. I can never say enough or do enough to make up for the pain I have caused her, but I certainly have tried. Recently my wife's cat Puffy had to be put to sleep, after twenty years her health was failing. So one warm fall day, my wife started digging the 3x2x3 foot hole and then began preparing for the veterinarian's visit and the burial. Since Puffy and I didn't always see eye-to-eye, I was not allowed to assist with digging one shovel full, nor was I welcomed at the vet's office. At last she arrived back at home with her eyes full of tears and Puffy now in a hardwood brass coffin. I was trying not to say anything of this extravert expense, or to make it worse when she asked me if I would open the lid, just to confirm that our twenty year old friend was in there. I felt at last she had forgiven me. Now, with both of us fully in tears, I was asked to lower the casket deep into the hole. Receiving no invitation to the eulogy, she then asked me to leave, after I covered the coffin with blue tarp. Within a few hours the grave had been backfilled and leveled and after a few weeks it was manicured as well as any Cemetery in the world. One month later, a statue of a little park angel appeared, followed by attractive white fencing, defining the grave. I should be so lucky. I realized this was her loving way of mourning and letting go and I loved her even more for it. About a month later I looked out on the back yard cemetery and I notice something new and walked out to investigate. There driven into the ground was a cat headstone, reading the following: PUFFY- 1985 to 2005 / Rest in Peace / and "The only one who could see right through that SON OF A BITCH I'm married to."

In time she would forgive me, but on this occasion and other events she showed me her ability to love the weakest unconditionally and she also assisted me in finding some of my heart and compassion.

On the first week of September 2001 my wife and her sister, along with her brother-in-law, decided to drive to New York City, after stopping at Gettysburg Pennsylvania and several other scenic areas across the mid west and upper east coast. A few weeks previous to this date and time, my daughter had in-laws arrive from New York City for a few days visit, along with their two sons. Both Kim and John were very proud parents and both successful in there own professions. She was an airline stewardess for American airlines. John her husband was a fireman working in the city. But I don't believe you would call him just a fireman. Not by a long shot. At the age of 43 he was now the youngest battalion Commander and Chief in New York City. Also in his spare time through discipline and study, he also had become an attorney. Not bad. Not bad at all. Before the week was over and after several days of family reunions, they were gone. My work prevented me from getting off during this time and meeting this fine man. I wish now I would have made more effort. My wife now had been gone for over two weeks. Being alone and missing her company immensely, as usual I was having a tough time without her presence or companionship. After voicing my disapproval and anger over her long absence and my private fear of always losing her, she finely agreed to return home after they visited New York City. She was very excited to tour the Statue of Liberty, Broadway and the World Trade Center.

From the Eightieth floor of the Twin Towers on this bright sunny day she could see forever and beyond. (But not the future) At last after flying out of Logan Field in Boston, she returned to Seattle to a greatly relieved husband. Thank God she returned

home safely. The next morning I would never forget. It was 9-11-2001. The phone ringing broke my sleep. And now a voice was yelling out, "Pick up the phone! Pick up the phone! Turn on the TV!" With the north tower of the World Trade Center now in flames and the aircraft now inside the eightieth floor of carnage and death, I knew at once this was no accident. After the second aircraft struck the south tower, I realized two things. We were soon to be at war and I had missed losing my wife at the World Trade Center or possibly again by the hijackers at Logan Field in Boston, by twenty-four hours. Thank God my Edna returned home. At the age of 43, husband, father, attorney, fireman and Battalion Commander John Moran on this day would never return home. After entering one of the towers to direct and command, fire and rescue, he would never be seen, nor heard from again. His body was never recovered.

One day in the spring of 2004 standing next to my mailbox, opening my first Social Security check, I looked across the entire Kittitas Valley of Eastern Washington and briefly I saw reflections of long ago and my childhood. The miles of fence line, the rows and rows of hay bales to be hauled and stacked by hand, the men of ranch work and horses and cattle as far as the eye could see. I was smiling now as the train of boxcars passed our home and I vaguely could see a skinny scared kid of 16 pursuing the ladder of his escape. After 45 years it was time to return to Montana and for the last time embrace my childhood and past.

Naval Seabees MCB
7 Rosie Roads 1964



Hazardous Waste
Disposal



Kindley AFB Bermuda 1965 - 1967



Agent Orange Disposal 1965-1967



SeaTac Airport - My Girls
Peter Kiewit Co – D9 1970



My sisters and mother 1966
Dianne, Julie, Beatrice.



Fast Cars, Faster Aircraft,
Loyal and Devoted Family.



Caesar – my bull

The Montana branding of my heart and sole, with the Lone Ranger, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Hop along Cassidy.



Dottie – my mare

This time I landed on Montana soil by jet plane in Billings, one hour south of Big Timber. After renting a car, I started my journey heading up I-90 Interstate. Already the hills and mountains beyond were calling me back through time. Looking over at the railroad tracks that now paralleled the freeway, I could see all the old boxcars, hear all the noise, feel all the freedom and know all the dangers of the rails. Some things were too strong and permanent to ever change. Reaching Big Timber I found, I was lost in old directions. After several attempts, finally I was able to get clear and accurate information from the few people who knew the area. I decided to stay in town the rest of the day and just relax, but some things just couldn't wait. After getting a room in the Grand hotel, the same place where I had long ago sought warmth and sleep, by accessing my room through the fire Exit, not the front desk, I slowly drove the few streets of Big Timber for old time sake. Looking down each street for some semblance of recognition, trying to recognize old haunts and looking hard for some face, some person who was there in my time and adventure. Almost everyone had died or left. Only a few of their children had remained. They were polite and understanding, some were amazed, some laughed and a few just stared and held their secrets.

Without thinking, I spoke of late August 1959 when all of Montana had been shaken by a massive earthquake. I had also mentioned the young girl of sixteen who had perished and my sense of loss even now 45 years later. Some wounds in life would never heal. Some people in Big Timber had never healed either. I stopped by chance to ask an old woman for information as she continued to hoe her garden. I elaborated on my story and described some of what I could remember. She totally understood and helped me fill in the voids. Finally as I was leaving, I thanked her as I introduced myself. For the first time since I had pulled over, her garden hoe had stopped. She stared hard and cold and for the first time ever in Big Timber I felt very unwelcome. I believed I said too much, talked too long and wore out my welcome with this lady of the soil so I politely said goodbye. I felt her eyes cut me right in half and her garden hoe could soon follow right behind. It was time to leave.

My first night's rest in the same room of the Grand Hotel I had occupied over 45 years ago was terrible. Most of the night, my mind raced back and forth, past and present, rolling over and over. In the black of night I wanted all of them to appear, laugh and talk for hours of old music, old cars and old times. Finally I slept.

The next morning as I left the hotel, I couldn't help but feel something was missing. There was something that I needed to help pull and channel me back to find all of them. I ran back up the long wide stairs of the Grand Hotel to retrieve my Stetson hat. Now in wardrobe and presence I would be delivered to their time and place. The road was still gravel and almost at once I would be drawn into a tunnel of dust and mud and a vastness that for a second would intimidate and stir a bit of apprehension. I quickly recharged my determination and silently goaded myself speaking out loud. "Keep going, run and grab the ladder!" The driveway wasn't where I had placed it in mind. It was now blocked by an old wire fence with No Trespassing signs hanging below. Knowing I always obeyed and respected the law, I slid between the wires and proceeded to walk the long driveway to the ranch of yesteryear.

Immediately I was overcome with shock and regret. The ranch house, barns and stables were all in a terrible state. So bad, that some dwellings were already collapsed. The long winters, dry hot summers and just plain wear and tear of time, had been too much. Both the owner, who withheld food and medical aid like it was gold, and all his family had died. The banks now controlled all the land for as far as the eye could see. No fields of green, no grass, any livestock, just opened and vast silence. There was only one thing there that I recognized. Underneath the branches and sage, parked forever, one last time, sat a Ford Tractor 8 N.

This machine, which I had run for over a month on hundreds of acres of hay, now sat, flat, filthy and faded. It had helped lay the foundation for me to operate all sizes of heavy equipment and numerous aircraft. I said, "Hello" and almost expected a response. Sitting now in the metal seat, I was aware of my bigger physical size, my worldly history and travels, so I proceeded to tell the tractor everything, as he listen quickly. I described my failure as a US Navy diver, but my success as a commercial pilot and helicopter flight instructor. I had worked from the Caribbean Sea, to the Mohave Desert, to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, on runways, pipelines, building and freeway construction. I had flown several aircraft as an employee, superintendent, land developer and contractor. I had operated after leaving this seat so long ago, almost all types and sizes of heavy equipment. For a short while I had even become a Deputy Sheriff. By now the tractor was very board and my eyes had pooled and welled up so bad I could hardly see.

I pulled my new Stetson hat down over my face, to hide my bunkhouse tails and tears. And then I heard them. "Hi-Oh Silver," those words of strength and protection had returned over the rim rocks behind the barns. It's the Lone Ranger. There he sat on Silver with Tonto by his side and he brought everyone else along. All were on horseback and everyone was smiling. There's Roy Rogers, Hoppy and Gene, Tom Mix, Bill Elliott, Tim Holt, Tim McCoy and Bob Steel. All the men who so many years ago had given me warmth, strength and protection and acted as my teachers, guide on and fathers were there. I could hardly believe my eyes or ears. At various times in my youth and life I would feel their presence, in school sports, fistfights and military duty. I always knew I would have to stand-up and measure up. Life would never be a cakewalk. I yelled out very loud how much I had missed all of them all these years. "I wanted all of you to know I made it through life with the guidance and strength you nurtured within me." I started to relay my tractor speech, when the Mask Man raised his arm and just smiled. I now knew that they knew. They had been watching me all these years. I realized now I had come all this way, not to brag or boast, but to ask for their approval.

Every child and every adult needs to know they have value and worth and are reflecting to others, skills, talents and polish from all the men of their foundations. As soon as I stood up, they quickly rode away, as they had done so many times before in my childhood. I knew they would never return again. As I started to walk down the long vague driveway, I would for the last time turn and wave. All the men of my bunkhouse who had become my competitors and allies now stood along the wide front porch. The goodbyes so many years ago, I never received after being fired for insubordination were how conveyed to me with warmth and understanding. They had known all this time that I had defended their position and protested loudly our mistreatment. As I looked down

the miles of fence line and stood staring between the wires. I'm reminded of every tale, trick, or joke they ever told. The plains, fields and prairie and miles of singing barbed wire would hold and concrete their stories and presence forever.

Darkness and strange roads made my drive back to Big Timber long and stressful. I had eaten very little since the day before and looked forward to a good meal. The newly remodeled Grand Hotel where I last paid 10 cents for a plate of French Fries was my restaurant of choice. I deliberately ordered a T-bone steak, just like they had in all the western movies. Even now, fellow patrons and travelers sitting around me and in the bar were dressed in western attire and flair. I was well healed financially now and would never be humiliated again. The golden glow of the tables and lighting, in the dining room, along with fatigue and hunger, set my mind and thoughts quietly reminiscing back in time. How many cattle drives had passed these windows? How many Cowboys? How many drinks? How many steaks and how many women? Where did they all go? I sat there staring at the corner of the room where so very long ago I had first seen her. I started to retrieve more of her memory and words she had spoken, but my thoughts and dreams on this night, would not produce her vision or words. For the first time since leaving home I was seeing my wife and starting to miss her. On several occasions during her absence I had not done well. I was feeling isolated, lonely and ashamed. The steak arrived by waitress. The hidden secrets of time and garden hoses would be delivered by Big Timbers officer of the law.

The sheriff, after politely imposing on my meal, asked if I would join him in the lobby after dinner. I agreed with slight embarrassment. Very quickly I became the focus of every diner and waitress and couldn't help but notice several cowboys staring out from the bar. I had seen this sheriff on the first day I arrived in town. I couldn't remember where we had met. His face was so familiar and I almost asked his name. It must have been his hat, gun and holster. He stood and walked like someone I used to know. After asking me several questions and verifying my ID, I notice he was not taking notes, like all official business or police work would require. When he asked when I last left Montana, I finally spoke up. "December 26, 1959 and what's the problem?" He said he had a complaint from an old woman down the street that I had upset her, with a stranger's presence and by asking so many sensitive questions. The Earthquake had killed many people that day and caused some others who survived a lifetime of pain. Without asking for particulars, I apologized, stated my reasons for my journey back to Montana and that I planned to leave in the morning. I then requested his name. He answered Sheriff Powell. The name rang no bell; we had no past or friends in common. After the questions and confessions of my journey, I couldn't help but notice the good sheriff was making small talk, procrastinating with his exit and even ordered coffee. I started to relax and came to believe he just wanted to make me feel at home. He succeeded, as we talked for well over an hour. My early embarrassment had now left as numerous restaurant and bar patrons passed by and smiled. I remarked they looked disappointed at not seeing a hanging. We both laughed like hell. The sheriff's deputy yelled through the door, Ron, I turned at once but before I could respond, Sheriff Ron Powell answered and said politely, goodbye. I knew we had something in common.

That night after a full meal, hot shower and all the lack of sleep, I escaped into a world of deep slumber and dreams. But very soon the history of my past and the secrets

and pain beneath the soil, the garden hoe had covered for so long, would no longer be silent.

By morning, I was fresh and eager, to head south on I-90, catch my plane and get home where I belonged. As I entered the freeway on-ramp, traffic was channeled, close to the barriers that separated the lanes. Only one lane was now flowing and this one passed right by and beside Sheriff Ronnie Powell. Before I accelerated, I hit my horn and waved. The Sheriff now had a look on his face, like I had just shot his puppy, or I had offended him in some way. Watching him now in the rear-view mirror, I rolled the window down to wave goodbye and was shocked, to see him sprinting very aggressively towards my car. I could not understand his behavior. My rental car was now doing at least 10 MPH and climbing when I heard three shouts. Stop, stop and at last a cry for over 45 years he never was allowed to express. DAD!

I immediately stopped, got out and my life would never be the same. Apparently my name was quite commonly heard around Big Timber. More than one person had alerted Sheriff Powell, that someone in town was using the same name as his own. He now used the last name of his stepfather who had been killed in 1969. His first and middle name had become my full name, at birth. The woman hoeing her garden was his great aunt. She had raised him since 1969 when both his mother and stepfather were killed. From his birth his mother would only give my full name as the father and my full name again, as his own. Her parents were furious with her selection of names and angry and embarrassed by her behavior. After her pregnancy was exposed, she was more or less banished to Bozeman Montana to live with her mother's sister and await the birth.

The night before, his Aunt related something to him that only I would have known. Her brother-in-law told her many years ago, that when I came to their home, in September of 1959, to see his daughter, he informed me as their landlord, that the entire family had been killed on August 29, 1959 in the Yellowstone Earthquake. He never divulged to me at any time that he was her father. I believed as he loaded furniture and personal affects that he was just the landlord. He further stated he was very angry with his daughter, the pregnancy and me. He wanted to inflict the same pain on me, as he and his wife had received. He did not realize until after it was too late, my reaction or the level of pain he would witness. He further stated that after a short while he became very concerned, as he witnessed my physical and emotional decline. As he escorted me to the bus, he became very worried for my safety and well being, I was completely inconsolable. The last thing that he said was how very sorry and ashamed he was, for holding this terrible secret, all these years.

I believe on that terrible day, that a part of me truly died. His lies and deception had worked. She had not died in this tragic earthquake, but several months later did give birth to my son. I had left Montana on December 26, 1959 and carried this nightmare with me wherever I went. I had no idea or knowledge of her pregnancy or of my child's existence after that time. Ten years later, in snow and ice, Mr. and Mrs. Powell of Big Timber Montana, would be killed waiting at a streetlight, by a semi truck, going too fast. The boy, my son, would spend the rest of his childhood being raised by this same great Aunt.

We would spend the next several hours of that day, with his great Aunt, comparing notes, dates and names. Our astonishment at me selecting her garden to stop and ask questions was beyond simple words. She was now treating me with the greatest of respect. We laughed and smiled, comparing our faces, traits, behavior and hobbies. We had so many things in common and so much to say after so long.

After several attempts to get started home, it was time to leave. After exchanging phone numbers and addresses and sincere promises to be a part of his life forever, I asked for directions to the Cemetery. Holding both of their hands now, I apologized for the pain that I had caused so very long ago. Finally after 45 years, as I drove through the gates of the cemetery, we would meet again. Before I could find her grave of headstone, I came across the resting place of Mrs. Robert Elgas. On that cold Christmas day in 1959, she and her husband Bob would see to it that I receive food, shelter and the warmth of a loving home and a new shirt that fit like a glove. I most humbly thanked her and expressed my sincere gratitude. A few months back this year; I was again able to locate Bob Elgas in Oregon. I believe he was shocked and amazed at my long devotion to their kindness and memory. Turning away now, I had not walked more than 50 feet, when finding myself face to face, with the grave of the girl, of all my childhood dreams and the mother of my son. My embarrassment with her husband beside her left me for a few minutes, speechless. Slowly, I covered everything I ever wanted to tell her. All the emotion, pain and anguish, I had so long felt, now would be expressed. I kept saying, "I didn't know, I didn't know." I told her how badly my heart and inner soul ached, with her father's delivered story so long ago, of her family's death. My desire even now for the softness of her face and mouth. I again wanted to taste the freshness of her breath and lose myself in her hair. For a second, I wanted to retrieve my 16th year as her friend and lover. My arms are around you now. Can you feel me? Closing my eyes, I knelt and held her headstone in my arms and thanked her for naming and giving me my son.

He now knew that he had two younger sisters. Oh god I loved you so. I told her, because of my good taste in women, my wife, would find and save me, from a life of loneliness and pain over forty-four years ago. My girls and grandchildren live just down the street and I know they received a lot of my anger. For the last time in my life I would briefly, but clearly feel her presence. As I slowly walked away, I reluctantly opened the now peaceful, melancholy part of my heart. I smell the fragrance of Ivory Soap and the aroma and texture of her gorchious hair. I see very clearly a young girl of sixteen in Levi's, boots and spur's and once again, I'm with you. Please Shannon, Please kiss me goodbye and remove this pain I have carried so long. Oh please forgive me. At last a breeze of softness and gentle passion surround me, lightly touching my cheek and holding my arms. I am kissing you Ronnie, forever and I do forgive you. Wanting now not to leave, as I look back now over my shoulder at the lifetime window of my past, I'm reminded of so very long ago when I wore a younger mans cloths, when my confidence, self-esteem and desire, would leap forward when I heard her words. Hold me tight and forever, for I've been waiting for you for a long, long, time, after I had said, I apologize for loving you.

On November 10, 2006, at the age of almost 64, I returned to Evergreen High School in Seattle to respectfully request my high school diploma. The Veterans Day

ceremonies that day made it very clear; all who served in the armed forces of the United States Honorably and missed graduating from high school through the Department of Veterans Affairs and Washington State Department of Education would receive their diplomas. After contacting each organization for consideration, I await their decision on my graduation in the spring. I have finely come home full circle.

So if by some chance encounter or meeting, you should observe a slight lustful adolescent of an old man with conversation based on wine, women, song, and worn out, monotonous stories, of the truly good old days. Remember this as I scream out, weep, and beg you not to forget me.

We were the children of the forties and fifties. Raised on war stories; Father knows best, Leave it to Beaver, Mickey Mouse, Mickey Mantle, hot rods, and the conception and creation of rock and roll. Are addictions as adolescences were Red Rider BB guns, Baseball, Basketball, Football, Playboy, and the back seats of old cars, necking with the girl down the street who said she would. Oh god, give me one last chance to batter up one last time. To hit the home run I never could. To catch the longest football pass at the biggest game, and make the last minute basket. But most of all to hold with tender and reverence all the girls and women of my childhood for one last kiss and embrace, as we dance to songs called Peggy Sue, Oh Donna, Chantilly Lace, and reluctantly remember the deaths of our worshiped companions Buddy Holly, Richey Valens, and The Big Bopper.

But now all our heroes of childhood have come and gone, with names like Superman, Tarzan, Hoppy, Gene, Roy, and the Lone Ranger. World War 11, The Korean and Vietnam War has come and gone as well, along with Ike, Patton, Rocky Marciano, Elvis, John F Kennedy, and a warrior called Martin Luther King. We would see the civil rights movement, assassinations, space travel, computers, cell phones, and the New York World Trade Center attack called 9-11. We would coin the slogan, Tune In, Turn On, and Drop out. Many would fight in a senseless war called Vietnam, and never return. Others would fight in a place called Baghdad, and Afghanistan. Some did return with sever wounds and an illness called drug addiction or P.T.S.D and never were the same. And all of us throughout the world would learn and fear the word AIDs, or H.I.V positive. Others would survive years of childhood poverty, desertion and hunger, abuse and despair. But in time all of us would grow on to become husbands and wives, providers, fathers and grandfathers, grandmothers, mothers, and most of all leaders.

And now most of my friends of childhood have come and gone. Even Stan the man my catcher would die by his own hand, after drugs and chemotherapy failed to stop the oral tumors, as the rest of us prepare for combat against heart disease, cancer, old age and senility. We would quickly learn to embrace words like cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure. Alcohol, drugs, and marijuana, were replaced with diet, exercises, and chemotherapy. And now I know, and understand why, my father drank whiskey.

If you listen very carefully in the quite of the night looking upward into the heavens, you can hear our laughter and music, feel our affection, and bare witness to our achievements of life, of the big plays, at the big games wearing Levies, Petal Pushers and D.A haircuts. With our steadfast courage when we believed the entire world was watching, we pursued honor, success, and family. I hear all there voices now, of the boys and girls that I played with, and the fine men and women they became. I see there smiling faces, their youth, and there beauty and once again I seek their approval. If you concentrate real hard you can hear one voice above all the others yelling out to all the girls and boys around. Hey girls, watch me jump watch me run, kiss me quick. Hey guys,

watch me dive, watch me fly, catch the ball. For you made me, all of you, to never stop trying. And the voice is me. God what a journey.

Thanks just for reading and listening. I have given you just about every personal and painful secret of my childhood, with only slight or small additions of some fiction to my youthful events, adventures, and haunting past up to the old age of 64. You now have the keys to all of my soul, spirit and being. I would ask you now to take these treasures of memory, time, and some wishful thinking, and use them as collateral, against me. But please know that my words to you concerning Superfund, Seattle Terminal 18 Harbor Island, should be accepted as truth and fact. I must build a bridge now from my eyes to yours.

Once more just briefly, I need for you to remember a time and place on the Duwamish River around the end of March 2000 when I was about to make a decision that would affect me the rest of my life. Remember, after witnessing all the blatant, wrongful and illegal acts on this Superfund hazardous waste site, I decided to confront the Project Manager and inform him of all that I was witnessing and had been ordered to do. Just one day before this meeting an explosive, angry and deceitful Safety Officer confronted me. We had just had a major fuel spill, one of the D-8 Dozers, cutting grade had ruptured one of the many fuel tanks that I had been ordered to smash and bury. This was at least, the third major fuel spill since the beginning of the year. My men and I had been ordered not to break radio silence since the previous spill had occurred and nobody was to call 911 except the Safety officer or Project Superintendent. This was not only morally wrong, but the last spill hadn't been 500 feet from the first, near the numerous million gallon fuel storage tanks on Harbor Island, so it was very dangerous as well.

We were required to immediately call the Coast Guard and Fire Department for the water contamination and the obvious fire threat. We were also required to call the Dept. of Ecology for the monitoring and the fuel cleanup overseeing. It was required by my job specs and by State and Federal law. And it DID NOT happen. My superior screamed, "How many FF'n times do I have to tell you not to break silence on fuel spills? Wait until after I have made radio contact to describe the danger, threat and our need for assistance." His transgressions never ended his ethics never appeared. From his treatment of the men, my men, not allowing them regulation lifejackets, not allowing them to file proper accident reports, not requiring pre job blood tests, not allowing with confirmation or clarity, mandatory blood test after any type of accident and finely, requiring them to pay over \$600 dollars for any negative test result. His blatant refusal to demand all soil testing before personnel were deployed into the field of operations or any export of soils, sod, mud, etc. His lies and cover-ups after the only soil tests conducted on January 6, 2000 showed a lethal exposure to my men and me. (Remember the number 51-PPM) His allowing no showers or appropriate decontamination facilities and no truck washes, although they were required by the job specs without exception.

Years before this safety officer would have found a different and less polite opponent; one who had been in numerous fist fights on the job. Back then it was the only way to settle things. Sometimes I won and sometimes I lost. But I always got my point across. But by that time, I was almost 58 years old and much slower and wiser. I also had a lot more to lose and I truly believe that if you're going to lead, then you need to do so professionally and maturely. After informing the Project Manager of everything I had see, witnessed and been ordered to do, I was rather surprised, disappointed and angry that he was unimpressed. He finished our dry conversation by stating that he would look into

these allegations by me and that he had better not see it. He told me that I must do as I am told and that I should get along with the safety officer.

Within one hour, the Project Superintendent had me turn in my pickup and start operating the road grader. This obvious demotion resulted in over \$40,000 a year less in pay and the loss of my title of Assistant Superintendent. It also created a cancer in my future job prospects as a leader and as production boss in my profession. I never, would recover from this. Within five minutes after I received this obvious demolition, I informed the Project Manager that this wrongful termination of my title "Superintendent" and redeployment, was unacceptable to me and I would clean out my desk and leave. Later on that month the project manager would claim to state authorities that I had resigned. Nobody in the construction field, with any good since, in the middle of winter, ever resigns or quits a job. Nobody.

The long drive home was painful to extreme, embarrassing and humiliating. I would spend countless nights, months and then years grieving and then at last planning. After several days of unemployment and nightmares of retaliation with explosive aggression, I knew I had to do something that even today I do not regret. The first week of April 2000 I became a Whistleblower. I contacted each of the following, O.S.H.A., the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Dept. Of Ecology, Washington State Dept of Labor and Industries, the Port of Seattle and every TV and radio station in Seattle. I also contacted both the Seattle Times and the P.I. newspapers. To this day, I'm damn proud I did.

Within days the E.P.A. would find soil all the way over in Bothell that had not been tested, but which had come from our job site. Within hours, an Industrial Hygienist with the Dept of Labor and Industries would be closely monitoring the job site and would eventually issue an Order of Cease and Desist on a large portion of the job. Within months L&I would issue over 34 citations, many of which were classified as serious. Now the EPA, State Ecology, Port of Seattle and even helicopters would monitor the safety and procedures of all actions on Terminal 18, Harbor Island.

Unfortunately, the damage was already done. Not only to the integrity of the clean up, but to the river and to the safety of the men and women and even to myself. I. Would find out many months later that the only soil's test, conducted on January 6th of 2000, did not produce readings of 51 Parts per Million. From AGRA Engineering Solutions, on the soils test for just lead conducted at the Sea-Fab's C.E.M site, on that day, the following results were made public over a year after I left the project.

Sample 53-1, 568 PPM.
Sample 53-2, 97,000 PPM.
Sample 53-3, 88,800-PPM.
Sample 53-4, 6,090.0.PPM.
Sample 53-5, 1320 PPM.

Now I know why several personnel were bleeding from their noses, including myself. Those lying bastards! On that same day, the Attorney General's Assistant handed me a map of the entire project site. It showed that they had completed their remedial

investigation for the island wide unit commissioned by the E.P.A. between May 1991 and February 1993. This included the performance of a feasibility study, which revealed the panoramic array of pollutants on, in and under the island wide unit. They were called the Westin Studies and I had neither heard of nor ever seen their existence before this day. The project manager would later testify under oath that he just thought the maps and E.P.A. studies were just produced for past cleanups. (Yeah, right.) Before we had set foot on that project, these studies showed the following contaminants island wide: surface soils, Petroleum Products-concentrations up to 51,000 mg/kg, PAHs-concentrations up to 50 mg/kg. PCBs-concentrations up to 420 mg/kg. Lead found over most of the island, had concentrations up to 401,000 mg/kg. Arsenic-concentrations up to 1,830 mg/kg. Cadmium-concentrations up to 131 mg/kg. Chromium-concentrations up to 791 mg/kg. Subsurface soil, petroleum products-concentrations up to 90,517mg/kg. PAH-concentrations up to 182/mg/kg. PCBs-concentrations up to 5.48mg/kg. Lead-concentrations up to 32,200 mg/kg. Mercury-concentrations up to 8.1 mg/kg. Groundwater Petroleum products- Benzene-up to 3,900 micrograms/liter. Ethyl benzene-up to 1,800 micrograms/liter. O-Xylene-up to 16,000 micrograms/liter. Vinyl-Chloride-up to 7 micrograms/liters. Mercury-up to 3 micrograms/liter. Cadmium-up to 21 micrograms/liter. Lead-up to 64 micrograms/liters. Zinc-up to 1,700 micrograms/liter. Ammonia-elevated levels.

Now you know what I know about the project called Terminal 18 Harbor Island. My employer, Morrison-Knudsen Construction, knew everything. Except that I would fight back and for a long time. Within months, the company would change their name to Washington Group International or W.G.I. They would also file for bankruptcy and never have to pay a dime to any of the almost thirty plaintiffs who filed suit, me included. On November the 8th and 14th of 2000, the Dept. of Labor and Industries and WISHA ruled in favor of the plaintiff, Ronald A. Slater. I would never receive a penny and refused the five cents on the dollar settlement they offered me. I also refused to sign a confidentiality agreement or gag order and a not eligible for rehire agreement. I did nothing wrong.

In April of 2000 as I became a whistleblower in Seattle, in the little town of Picher, Oklahoma, the Federal Government, the F.B.I and the E.P.A began to go through 400 boxes of project documents seized in a government raid in February. The project referred to as Tar Creek Superfund Industrial Waste Cleanup, was highly contaminated with lead and was plagued by cost overruns, time delays, complaints of shoddy work and a broad criminal investigation. These various government agencies wanted to know whether M.K. Construction Company officials had falsified records, over billed the government, cut environmental corners or if they had covered up safety mishaps. Where have I heard this before?

In the winters of 2000 and 2001, the long process of the trial and fines against M.K./Washington Group began. After first being defeated by half truths and twisted lies, a King County Superior Court Judge, on August 18, 2004, ruled against Washington Group and affirmed the \$48,500 in fines. This company, with all their money, is now appealing this verdict. M.K./Washington Group would submit to the Washington State Dept. of Revenue, quarterly tax returns for doing hazardous waste remediation. They described this project as being "highly contaminated", while obtaining tax savings in the millions. I say to you again as one of your sons, there was no cleanup or remediation for

over five months. "Bury everything," they said, all we saw, all we suspected, all we encountered. The toxins and contamination that we pumped late at night and early in the morning into the river are still there. Everything we buried underground is slowly leaching towards the water, the bottom, the fish and the sand throughout Puget Sound.

We did as we were ordered out of fear of termination, unemployment and blackballing in the industry. I should know, it happened to me and I would pay a very heavy price. I would never be called superintendent again and I would carry the mental and physical scars to this very day. This same company, on citation No.303604540 that encompassed 34- L & I citations, is now doing major work at the Hanford Nuclear Waste Cleanup in Richland, Washington. They are also about to receive a billion dollar contract, for the Seattle Monorail like nothing ever happened. But it did. Why or how Washington Group International was qualified to bid on this elite and exclusive project is beyond me.

Recently I was informed that W.G.I. was not forthcoming or truthful when asked by the attorneys representing the City of Seattle Monorail committee when they were clearly required to be candid and honest during pre bid discussions, "Do you have any L&I citations issued to W.G.I. Inc. or any citations issued in the name of your bankrupt company called, Morrison and Knudson." Their answer "No we do not." Absolutely amazing that these 34 citations were not brought up or divulged. Only after several dozen phone calls made by me to the Monorail committee and to their attorneys and the City of Seattle Council members, were these cover-ups of state and federal violations at terminal 18 harbor island finally exposed. At last after several months of lies and deceit by W.G.I. Morrison and Knudson, they withdrew their bid for the Monorail Construction, City of Seattle. But even then I was not finished. Not by a long shot. Sometimes toxins, contamination and hazardous waste need time for the proof of the physical harm to appear.

After leaving Terminal 18, I received an MRI, type x-ray, where they would find a large growth on my right kidney. They also had to remove a small tumor from my right arm. As of now, my kidneys are still working normally, but I am very leery of a kidney biopsy. Who's fooling whom? I'm scared half to death. Recently I was informed that I have now developed diabetes, and cancer as well. And it will only get worse.

Several of my men have not been so lucky. Joe the cat skinner, someone I have known for over 36 years, passed several liters of blood and had to be hospitalized. Recently I was informed that he is suffering from kidney failure. Not once did Joe receive a blood test, even after he kept falling down on the job and finally had to go home sick. Charlie Joe's grade checker was sick for two weeks and required hospitalization after getting deathly ill on the job and again, no blood test. He would also receive kidney dialysis. Scott, after leaving the job site, suffered from reoccurring lung ailments and finally fell into a coma that lasted for around 22 days. One woman by the name of Teresa would collapse and have to be medivached off the island. Later she told me of her strong concerns and suspicions about toxic exposure on this job. She ought to know, she carries a Superintendent's card with over 80 hours of training on hazardous waste clean up and remediation. At least four employees that I had hired carried the same card and experience. Several ironworkers, with first names of Brian, Henry, Louis, Chris and Frank, would walk off the job, each man now bleeding from the nose and at least one from the rectum. The Safety Officer would tell everyone including myself and especially

the men that were still passing blood from the rectum, nose and unable sometimes just to remain standing; Relax "It's just the dust. It's all been cleaned up." Sub-Contractors were told this as well, even as there men continued to become sick.

Several months later after finding out how highly contaminated this Superfund site actually was, we would also find that our suspicions of having an untrained Safety Officer in Hazardous Waste Remediation were true. But it gets worse. The Project Manager, the Project Superintendent, the Project Safety officer and other Supervisors, didn't have either the 40-hour of mandatory training or the card of proof. They also didn't have the eight-hour additional training for the Supervisor Card even though several had been there for months. This training was and is required by both the Federal and the State Government and WHISA state guidelines.

Everything that I have stated here, I have given full testimony to under oath and so have several men both employees and eyewitnesses of what occurred between the years of 1999, 2000 and 2001 at Terminal 18 Harbors Island. I believe the Dept. of E.P.A., the Dept of Ecology and the Port of Seattle, failed not only us, but also all the citizens of this country. I never saw one representative from any of these Departments or the Port of Seattle, the owners of this island, for the entire five months that I was on the project. They only showed up after I called each and every one of them. Where the hell were they on the job? Where were they during and after I left? And why didn't they insist on safety and job specs compliance? Why didn't they insist on soil testing, before the job commenced or the export of soils, sod and mud off the island by M.K. CO.? Or have it done themselves? I only know one thing now for sure. Men became very ill and almost dying. Others will be and will have know idea what caused it still believing it's all cleaned up. Not one man or woman got a dime or a nickel for their exposure or illness or even possible early death. This time I could not protect my men. I couldn't even protect myself.

At last on the end of December 2004, I arrived in downtown Seattle and for several hours picketed the office of the Mono Rail Committee for the city of Seattle and W.G.I.'s office on 5th Avenue. It was two days before Christmas at around 8:00 and the weather was getting very cold. This was not the first time I had picketed W.G.I. My journey to Hanford Washington, and the Tri-Cities area during the summer to picket and let anyone know what this contractor had been doing in both Seattle and Oklahoma was very exposing to them and very stressful to me. I found it very difficult walking with a sign in the intense heat. The stress was beyond description and constantly I needed to urinate. I was also ready to defend myself in more ways then one. In Seattle, my home, I felt safe walking back and forth in front of each building, letting everyone know throughout the city, what this Contractor had done to my men and I and what they have done to Harbor Island and the Duwamish River. On my last hour of picketing, I found myself walking on 4th Avenue; one block up from W.G.I.'s building. This building was the Monorail, City of Seattle building, one block square, from Fourth to Third streets and was what we called the Security building.

Looking across the street, I recognized a little entry way where my friends and I used to go when we were about twelve years old over fifty years ago. It was called Osborn's Sporting Goods and they had the best of all things fishing or hunting. Stan,

Billy and I would hang around the counter just to stare and dream. Somehow melancholy showed its face and I was caught between severe anger and teary-eyed memories. The cold didn't help either cutting through my face and eyes as I walked now with sunglasses on for several reasons.

Suddenly the words Security Building and my location, place, time and memory traveled back over almost sixty years, as I looked above me at the second floor. At that time over half of this building had been a huge indoor shopping mall. Upstairs was a small nursery where I slept, as my mother looked for work or went shopping. In the mall was a meat market and behind the purified glass counter now stood before me, my Father. I see him now smiling, dressed in all white, with his curly black hair and rugged good looks. He's in his early thirties now, full of health and dreams without any signs of whiskey, alcohol or temper. How is it that your father always seems 10 feet tall? This was the man who tossed me to the ceiling so very long ago. God I loved him and I feared him.

As I walked to the south-east corner of this memorable building, I saw an electric Christmas star across the street on the next building draped over the entire corner, hanging down almost five stories. This was my mother's place of employment for almost thirty years. The Bon Marche' was and is one of the most exclusive shopping centers in Seattle and now throughout the state. She was in ladies high fashion and sports ware. She was not only good at sales, my mother was beautiful. Not just good looking, but Hollywood drop dead gorgeous. And they knew it. And so did we. Several times in her younger years my mother would literally stop car traffic in intersections against the light. With her long auburn hair and Victorian poise and manners, a figure and wardrobe that stated beauty and impeccable taste, she had it all. Except for one thing, the ability to show outward affection to her children. It just wasn't there, although my early behavior didn't help. Many times I would find myself admiring the beauty of my mother and two sisters and feel so proud.

My mother died in her mid nineties. I held her hand knowing she would soon be leaving and I said quietly, "If you could only have seen her then" as I kissed her hand goodbye. But now as I walked along the sidewalk for the first time in almost 62 years, my Father and Mother stood before me smiling. No longer did I sense the fear, loneliness and pain of childhood. No longer did I hear or feel their anger towards each other as all their hands were clasped together.

I'm walking and picketing, stumbling, tripping and sobbing, as strangers and pedestrians stood staring in disbelief. With instant shock, emotion and an outpouring of tears, I called out to Stephanie, now standing beside my mother, holding her arm and carrying a large bouquet of tulips and daffodils from our home at Madrona, deep in the forest of green. Just look how beautiful she is. And now to her right is Paul Kapelos, my big brother of yesterday, standing beside my father smiling broadly, as both men held their arms out with fist closed and thumbs up, in absolute approval. What a buddy, what a friend, what a brother. Oh my God. Sitting now directly in front of everyone I loved, as if again holding court, with her legs crossed in Levis, boots and spurs and her unmistakable fragrance, smiling and flirting with me, was the love of my childhood, passion and healing, My Shannon. Oh, how very much I loved her. And needed her. As I now do my wife! It was a feeling of complete love, warmth and softness, but there understanding, most of all. This time they would not leave me, never, this time they were all here looking down and watching me and smiling, as I yelled out loud, crying like a

child. "Hey Dad, please watch me! Hey Mom, come look at me, as I walked and carried my picket sign. I would not fail them again, for this was my 15 minutes of glory. This was my 15 minutes of fame, and my finest hour. But my wife and two daughters and four grandchildren, were my greatest victory. I love you all. PAPA.

On August 15, 2005, in Washington State, Seattle Judges Kenneth Grosse, Ann Ellington and William Baker concurring, ruled in their court of appeals and affirmed the decision of the Superior Court against Morrison-Knudson W.G.I Corporation. The three-judge panel ruled the contract that M/K signed, was very clear. Various contaminated waste and cleanup was to be contemplated and the 36 L&I Washington state charges against them were filed properly. Furthermore, Morrison Knudsen knew that Harbor Island was highly contaminated and a Superfund site. They further stated there is no evidence in the record to support a conclusion that Harbor Island does not continue to be a specific threat to the safety and health of individuals, or the environment. In fact admissions by Morrison Knudsen belie its argument that this was not a hazardous waste operation. For the last time I have won. Or have I. They will never call me boss or Superintendent again. This would break my heart forever.

On the 20th of September 2007, I would take the longest drive of my life over Snoqualmie Pass I-90 to the Veterans Hospital Beacon Hill, Seattle. The annual blood test that all active military personal and past veterans are required to submit to could no longer be ignored. There is a separate exam of the P.S.A that gives very early warning of something they would call early prostate cancer. This time the Lone Ranger, Gene Aunty, and Hop-a-Long Cassidy, along with The Range Rider, Tonto, and Superman would not appear to protect me. I am now alone, in the fight of my life as I enter old age, despair, and fear. Somewhere, sometime in the past there was a break in something they call my D.N.A. I damn and curse all Agent Orange, Nuclear and Toxic Waste for I know now I have paid a very heavy price.

Almost daily with a vision that is becoming clearer by the hour, I see my mother and father, Stephanie, Shannon, and Paul sitting on the branches of my favorite madonnas, with open arms, smiling down on me deep in the forest of dreams. There's Jimmy, Phil, and 'Stan the man my catcher', playing baseball on the cushioned soft floor of green, as all my family and long gone friends are there to embrace me. Ever so softly as the kiss of a newborn baby, the fragrance, love, and aroma of my childhood trees of adventure and the stolen fruits and flowers of spring, passion and healing now surround me. I am almost in heaven.

After writing this long, agonizing and complete story, I realized I was having trouble letting go of the memories of my past and my present. I also realized that after putting everything on paper, I was at long last starting to finally heal. Many months ago after I received my annual Veteran's check-up I had two nurses standing beside me with wide-eyed concern. I related my strong desire to attack with extreme aggression, my fierce anger, my hate, my planning and my desperation. I was in trouble and they knew it. With softness grace and tact, and the love and concern of two sister nurses and my fellow veterans, they directed me to a therapist that worked for the Dept. of Veteran's Affairs. After several months of just talking, I am at long last, getting back to normal and sleeping almost the whole night through. I found out that I had a lot of company, as my fellow Veterans had the same past, fears and anger. I would never be alone again. I want to take

this opportunity to thank the US Navy, the US Army and the Washington National Guard, for allowing me to inter her ranks. They gave me my skills, training and a career. They also gave me self-esteem, pride and the knowledge that I would always STAND UP! I did. Thank you, my country.

I could never leave you without taking this opportunity as well, to give sincere and humble thanks to the several dozen citizens of the CleElum town of Kittitas county of Washington state. In particular the men and women of the Iron Works gym who with heart felt concern and sympathy, recognized my injuries, and my mental and physical decline, while daily giving me encouragement, affection, and complete understanding. Their support and encouragement of exercise, nutrition, and therapy. Their ability to encourage me without embarrassment, while directing my pain, fear, and anger, to pen and paper, so all the world would know are story, and the truth. They have become my family. God what beauties.

I would also like to say Thank You, to Kyle and Wendy Dumas of Cle Elum, Washington for teaching me how to use a computer and for Wendy's hard work on helping me proofread my story. Thank you for always being there. Thank you to all my friends, and co-workers, and the citizens of CleElum Washington who encouraged me to write my story and supported my whistle blowing as fact. I needed you to listen and you did. For every embrace, kiss or affection from all the girls and women of my childhood, and youth, slowly receding the pain, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

Finely I wish to thank my family for they're daily, and constant understanding, and unwavering love. Thank you my Edna, for your dedicated support and loyalty. I would never have survived without you. As I now leave I must convey to you my message in consolidation of years of history and experience and my warning. Always, always know your children's whereabouts and whom they are with. Develop with them an early open and candid relationship. NEVER; NEVER, give up your weapons, or the right to keep and bare arms. NEVER. I now attach two photo's, for two reasons. Once I did ware a younger man's cloths and once I was here. Also, as I inter old age, I know one thing for sure. I stood up, many time's and was counted. RONALD ARTHUR SLATER. 6-1-07.



SEP • 63



SEP • 63

Naval Seabees - We would fight, I guarantee that!



Cat Loader – The bigger the better 1996





Ronald Arthur Slater would spend over 45 year in the field of Heavy Equipment. Besides flying helicopters when available, he would work on projects with heavy equipment from and in the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean, Washington state, and the Alaska pipeline of '74. Totaling union recorded time as well, he would accumulate over 40,000 hours in the seat, moving the earth.

He lists the following equipment where he has spent most of his life and career. TD18 Dozer, Hough H90 Loader, Cat 933,955,977, track loaders. T.S 24 Terex, Uklut Scraper. Wapco Paddle 777, Scraper. Case 450 and 1150 Loader. Trojan 6000 Loader, Terex 15-yard loader. Cat 944, 966, 980, 988, and 992 15 yd rubber tired loaders. Cat 982 rubber-tired dozer. John Deere 450 and 550 finish dozer. John Deere and Cat, 430 rubber tired backhoe. Cat D-4, D-5, D-6, D-7, D-8, and D-9 ripper and push cat. Grove crane 50 Ton. Petibone crane, 35 ton. Cat 621, 631, 641, and 657B Scrapers. Gallon road grader. Cat 120, 140, 12G, 14G, and 16G road grader and finish blade. Peterbuilt, Kenworth and Mack trucks, truck and trailer pup, and lowboy.

After starting his own construction company in 1980 he would operate, run, and contract, all projects utilizing Hitachi, Cat, Komatsu, Keibelco, and Link-Belt track excavators all sizes to 110000 lbs, doing land development, clearing, demolition, foundations, excavations and underground utilities throughout Washington State. Before retirement from injuries in 2004, Ronald Slater carried glowing letters of references from several major northwest companies doing multi million dollar projects.

He holds three honorable discharges (totaling eight years) from the Navy, Army, and Washington Guard. He still holds a commercial and flight instructors rating in Rotorcraft helicopters and considers this F.A.A. License his greatest professional achievement. He currently lives with his wife Edna of 47 years in the small town of Cle Elum, Washington, where he is retired, but training everyday to ward off old age and keep cancer from re-appearing. He states that he owes everything to the United States Navy, Army, and Washington Guard. He requests from all of you that any and all children who have seen childhood abuse be encouraged to read his story and then hopefully realize that there is help for all of them, and a better tomorrow.



A RIVER LOST?

Decision time on the Duwamish

 E-mail this  Print this  RSS
Last updated November 27, 2007 10:47 p.m. PT

Duwamish whistle-blower paid a steep price Ron Slater lost his job, health and his 'justice' in court

By ROBERT McCLURE
P-I REPORTER

After decades in the construction trade, Ron Slater had finally moved up. Management. A company truck. A healthy salary. Life was good.

Related Content

[Read the full report](#)

Other story in Part 3:

· Will South Park become the place to live?

But then Slater and his crew began to suffer mysterious nosebleeds, headaches and fatigue as they unearthed spots on a construction site with rainbow-hued water, metal shavings and a powerful industrial stench.

Soon, one of his workers passed out mysteriously and had to be taken to the hospital.

Slater began to have deep doubts about his superiors at Morrison Knudsen Corp. when they had his crew drain contaminated water off Harbor Island, a Superfund site, into the Duwamish River.

Morrison Knudsen, one of the largest and best-known construction firms in the world, was clearing the decades-old industrial property owned by the Port of Seattle.

Slater's breaking point came when a bulldozer ruptured an underground tank of diesel fuel. Slater called on the radio asking for help -- only to have the project's safety officer speed over in his truck and bark, "How many ... times have I got to tell you -- don't get on the radio talking about fuel spills or calling 911."

"After a number of these confrontations over testing, over contaminated waste ... it was clear that if I didn't get along and go along, I was going to be going down the highway," Slater said.

Slater kept complaining anyway, and soon he was on his way down the road.

He contacted the state's Department of Labor & Industries. He also called the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, launching a major investigation -- and providing a cautionary tale for the Duwamish River Superfund site, next to Harbor Island.

The lesson from Slater: Unless cleanup contractors and everyone else involved are constantly and carefully watched, the job won't get done right.

After investigating the allegations brought by Slater and his crew, the state in October 2000 issued 34 citations for violations, including failing to protect employees from hazardous substances. It imposed a \$48,500 fine.

Company challenges fine

Morrison Knudsen denied all of the charges and contested the fine.

"The Port of Seattle gave us the project. They told us that all known hot spots of contamination would be removed," said Aaron Owada, a lawyer representing Morrison Knudsen. "That's the context in which we accepted the job."

However, state records show the firm applied for a state sales tax exemption in connection with the work, citing the Superfund designation and the presence of lead, arsenic, cadmium, chromium and other pollutants. The bid documents on the \$110 million job made it clear it was a Superfund site.

And the federal cleanup plan shows that only certain classes of pollutants were supposed to be cleaned up before Morrison Knudsen arrived on the scene.

After he left Morrison Knudsen, Slater could never get work as a construction supervisor in Seattle. He says he was blackballed.

Slater got an attorney and sought a judgment against Morrison Knudsen, but his attorney gave up after the company's corporate parent, Washington Group International, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

What followed for Slater were years of depression and bitter anger before he found peace. Recently, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer and diabetes.

"I paid a heavy price," Slater said. "It's the price you pay when you go against the grain."

Slater's ordeal started in October 1999, when he arrived at Harbor Island, just north of the West Seattle Bridge, and was handed job specifications the size of a couple of Seattle phone books.

In there, he discovered, were explicit instructions about what to do if his crew encountered contaminated soils. He was in charge of demolishing the footings and foundations of old buildings, tearing out underground utilities and other work to prepare the land for redevelopment.

With four laborers helping him, he began fencing off the old buildings that needed to be demolished and doing other preparatory work. With no protection, they tromped all over the contaminated site.

A state inspector would later recount how the workers had to move "leaky drums of unknown materials." One worker was splashed with the chemicals. They had no bathrooms -- and no training in how to work around hazardous waste.

Still, "I was thrilled to have a job in the middle of winter, and I was thrilled to have a job where, finally, I was on salary," Slater recalled.

After several weeks, Slater and his expanding crew went to a week's worth of training on hazardous waste and how to properly handle it. It was eye opening.

He asked his boss, Roger Accornero, why he wouldn't go. Accornero replied: "I've been around (construction) 47 years. Nothing has happened to me and nothing ever will."

Even with the training, Slater and his workers didn't recognize it was hazardous waste their earthmovers were uncovering that was giving them headaches and nosebleeds and making them feel "flu-ish."

Only later would Slater learn that members of an ironworkers' union, who were in even more frequent contact with contaminated soils, also had developed nosebleeds, diarrhea, headaches and other symptoms. At least one passed blood in his urine.

Slater said he repeatedly confronted Accornero about the need to wash contaminated dirt off trucks before they left the site, about testing the soil and about the need for him to take the waste issue more seriously.

It was around New Year's 2000 that Theresa Smith, who supervised flaggers on Slater's crew, collapsed while directing traffic near the location of an old battery-production factory.

Slater's men began to complain, saying they shouldn't be working without protective clothing. Not long after that, Slater and his crew confronted Accornero, pointing to signs on the buildings that said, in big letters, DANGER.

What no one told Slater and his crew -- or, apparently, Accornero -- was that when EPA decided how clean the Harbor Island Superfund site would have to be, the agency approved leaving lots of contamination in the ground. PCBs at more than four times the state standard? No problem. Arsenic, cadmium, chromium -- all were left in the ground at levels exceeding state standards.

Slater and his workers appear to have dug into areas that violated even that arrangement.

Accornero relented, ordered the soil the men had been working in tested, and told them to move to another area for a few days.

'Nasty-looking material'

Slater's daily log from that day, Jan. 6, indicates there was 51 parts lead per million parts of soil at that location. That's just one part-per-million over what the crew was allowed to work in without protection. Slater says Accornero gave him the reading. Four days later, Accornero ordered them to return to the site, but specified that this time they should be wearing protective suits and respirators.

Records later would show, though, that the soil the crew worked in that day near the old battery plant had levels ranging up to 97,000 parts lead per million parts soil -- nearly 10 percent lead. Washington's lead cleanup level for industrial properties is 1,000 parts lead per million parts soil.

A few weeks later, while part of his crew was working in the old Lockheed shipyard, across the street from the old battery plant, Slater's radio cut on. It was John Wilkins, operator of an excavating machine.

"We've got some real nasty-looking material here, Ron," Wilkins said, "and it's all over the place."

Just as Slater arrived, a tractor-trailer hauling dirt ruptured its fuel tank on a piece of iron sticking out of the ground. Fuel spilled out.

Slater called on his radio. Soon Accornero arrived. Instead of having the crew clean up the spill, he ordered a crew member to grade it into the ground.

Bob Johnson, the safety officer, told Slater: "Don't break radio silence on fuel spills, and do not call 911 again unless you notify me and Roger first."

That same month, Wilkins hit a pocket of white, puttylike material -- in retrospect, probably some heavily lead-contaminated soil.

"It was sticky and goeey," Slater recalls, "like a muddy putty."

Johnson took a sample, then ordered Slater to tell Wilkins to bury it.

"Nothing leaves the island," was the order Slater said he received from Accornero. It wasn't the extra expense of transporting away contaminated soil -- the port was paying for that. But it took extra time, and to Morrison Knudsen, time was money, Slater said.

Slater's crew was responsible for managing all the water pumped out of the trenches where other crews were installing footings, foundations and utilities. They built ponds, where the water would dissipate at first. Then, with the ground underneath saturated, the water no longer soaked in.

Accornero ordered Slater to drain the material into storm drains connected to the Duwamish, Slater said, but he refused. Accornero ordered the men to do it -- and the contaminated water went straight into the Duwamish, Slater said.

It was a day in March 2000 that finally put Slater on the path to being a whistle-blower -- something he'd never conceived of.

Once again, Wilkins' voice came over the radio: "We've got some nasty material down here." It was a place where Slater had noticed wood, metal fibers and other indicators of contamination on the surface.

When Slater arrived, he could see it was another pocket of metallic fibers surrounded by water with rainbow hues.

"It was rancid," Slater recalls. "It was noxious as hell."

Just then, a bulldozer nearby tore into a buried diesel fuel tank. Once again, fuel started gushing out, this time in a stream.

"The fuel was really coming out in volume," Slater recalled.

Slater radioed for help: "We've got a serious fuel spill out here. Please call 911."

Moments later Johnson roared up in his white pickup, and that's when he scolded Slater, swearing, about breaking radio silence on fuel spills.

Appealing to a higher-up

The next day, Slater went to see his boss' boss, George Harvey, the man who originally hired him.

He had had it.

Slater ran through his complaints -- about his treatment by Johnson, about the litany of acts he considered illegal now that he had been trained in how to handle hazardous waste.

He told Harvey that he heard from Accornero that several other superintendents had been allowed to go back to being paid hourly, but remain management, while staying in the union. This way he could pay into his old, union-supported pension.

An hour later, Accornero told Slater he was being busted to foreman, and would be operating a grader. He would go back to hourly union pay -- but at about \$40,000 a year, half the salary he'd been earning. He wouldn't be a supervisor anymore; he'd be running heavy equipment.

Slater appealed to Harvey, to no avail. He came back the next day and tried again. No way. So he cleaned out his desk and left.

Slater wasn't the last one to be fired. His longtime friend and employee, Joe Boehme, was fired after apparently being poisoned by lead. He was working a small earthmover that had him down near the ground -- right where he would get a good dose of whatever was in the soil.

Boehme, now 70, just felt lousy.

"I was having trouble. I was losing strength and falling down on the job all the time," he recalled. "I'm one of those guys who never quits working. I just kept struggling.

"I made the comment to somebody that if I didn't start feeling better, I was going to retire."

His boss soon said, "Since you're going to retire anyway, we're going to lay you off."

Others continued to suffer, too.

"Almost every man on this project had symptoms," said Larry Rogers, who joined the crew after Slater left. "Every one of us had headaches. I ate more friggin' aspirin than you could shake a stick at."

The headaches ended after he left that job site, Rogers said.

The man who arrived at the Harbor Island job site to check out the workers' allegations was a state Labor & Industries inspector named Mac Davis.

Incredibly, when he first inquired, Johnson -- the safety officer -- denied the men were even working in a Superfund site.

So did Harvey. Accornero later stated in a deposition that he had no experience working at contaminated sites, but that since lots of tests had been done, the landowners "should have known where everything was."

Davis inspected the job site for another year and a half.

His citations of Morrison Knudsen were thrown out by Judge Mark Jaffe of the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals, who ruled that Harbor Island was not covered by hazardous-waste regulations in state labor regulations. The full board backed his view.

Then something uncommon happened. The state Attorney General's Office, which represents the Labor & Industries Department, appealed to Superior Court. It's common for employers to appeal there, but not the AG's office.

"It's very unusual. It's another indication of how important the department believed and continues to believe the case was and is," said Michael Hall, the assistant attorney general handling the case.

Courts, board rule in case

Superior Court Judge John Erlick reversed that decision in August 2004. Morrison Knudsen battled all the way to the Washington Supreme Court, which left intact an appeals court ruling that found for the state but sent the case back for the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals to re-examine the factual issues.

Last week, the board ruled in favor of Morrison Knudsen, saying in part of its 54-page ruling that the trial record "establishes that the central work performed by Morrison Knudsen was not cleanup of hazardous material, but was in fact construction work," and

"not all areas within the ... project on Harbor Island were contaminated with hazardous material."

The board said it found Slater "not credible" as a witness because he was suing Morrison Knudsen at the time, and because Slater's daily one-page reports on what work was done, using which equipment, only mentioned safety problems five times.

Morrison Knudsen's attorney, Owada, said the company is vigorously contesting the citations.

"They have to demonstrate there's a hazard that employees are actually exposed to," Owada said. "Without the demonstration that there's any kind of employee exposure, there can be no violation."

'It was about the workers'

Hall, though, pointed out that the citations didn't allege the workers were harmed. Rather, they are for violations such as failing to properly test the air for contamination.

Others included failing to provide protective equipment and failing to provide policies for safe work practices.

Slater, Hall said, "really put a face on the case for me. He helped me understand that this wasn't just about the (state) and Morrison Knudsen -- more, it was about the workers."

For Slater, Hall said, "This was the last chance to get what he felt was justice."

Slater, for his part, has no regrets about blowing the whistle. He won a judgment from the Labor & Industries Department that Morrison Knudsen had improperly fired him.

Had Morrison Knudsen's parent company not declared bankruptcy, the department would have owed Slater back pay of \$141,346.

Slater ended up going back to his former occupation as a heavy-equipment operator later in 2000 -- until an accident in March 2003 forced his retirement, leaving him in frequent pain and unable to turn his head to the left.

He grew suicidal. His personal hygiene slipped and his marriage was in big trouble. He grew teary-eyed at the smallest provocation.

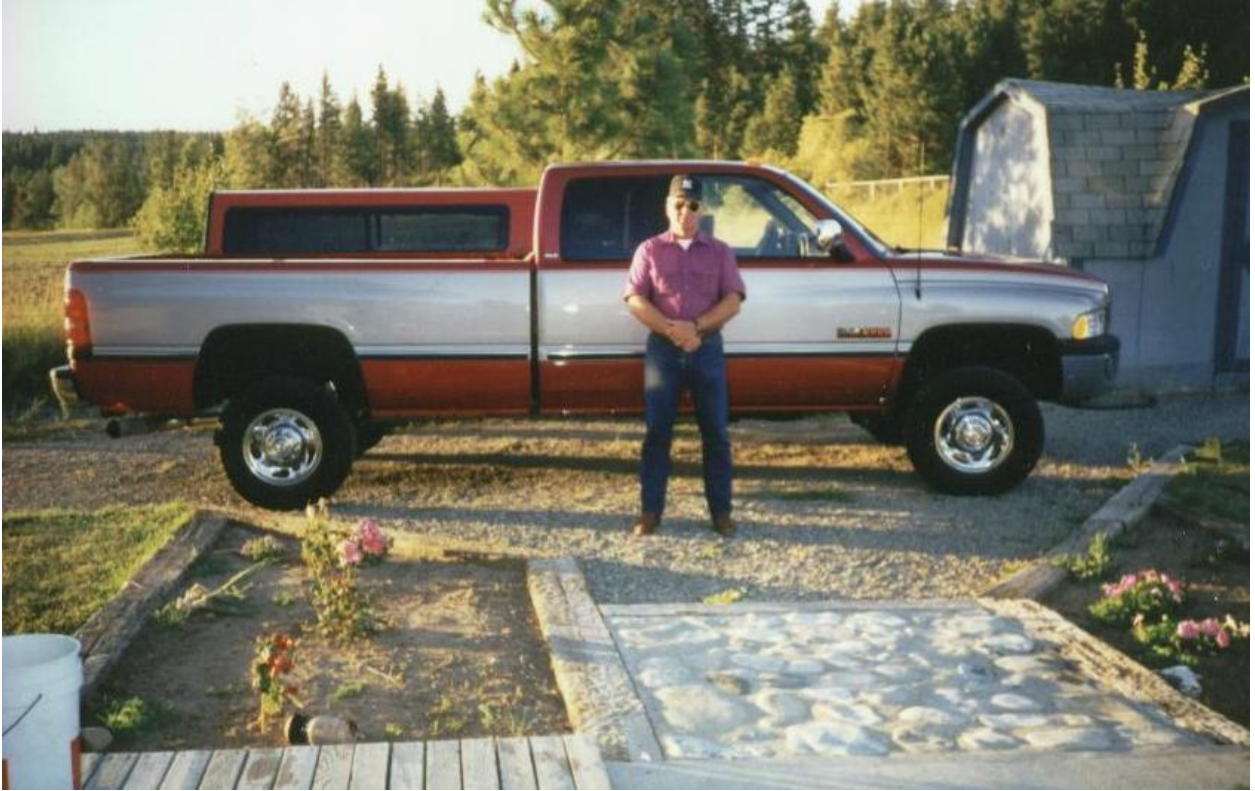
'I refuse to be silent'

A few months after the accident, he went to the Veteran's Administration clinic in Yakima, where he got anti-depressants, a referral for counseling -- and his life back.

Slater turned down Morrison Knudsen's offer of 5 to 10 cents on the dollar for his back pay claim -- \$7,000 to \$14,000 -- after the company declared bankruptcy. Why not take at least a partial settlement? It would have required Slater to never talk about what happened.

"I refuse to be silent," said the 64-year-old Slater, "and I never will be."

P-I staff member Jim Peterson contributed to this report. P-I reporter Robert McClure can be reached at 206-448-8092 or robertmclure@seattlepi.com. Read his blog on the environment at datelineearth.com. Soundoff (Read



Whistle blower – Forced Retirement – Dodge Tough - 2004



Port cleanup called unsafe

Precautions not taken at Harbor Island Superfund site, state alleges

Monday, March 26, 2001

By **ROBERT McClure**

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

One of the world's largest building and engineering firms treated a Superfund site at the Port of Seattle as a run-of-the-mill construction job, potentially endangering workers' health and the environment, according to state records and accounts provided by construction workers.

The state, in citations issued to the company, alleges that Morrison Knudsen Corp. workers were ordered to move "leaky drums of unknown materials"; that a worker was splashed with the chemicals; and that no decontamination showers were provided.

When company supervisors were confronted by the state inspector, they were "uncooperative" and denied any problems, state records show.

Workers later told the Seattle Post-Intelligencer that they complained of headaches, fatigue and nosebleeds, but were ignored.

They also told government investigators that they were ordered to dump thousands of gallons of contaminated water into drains leading to the Duwamish River. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency investigators who sought evidence of criminal wrongdoing in the incident could not verify that allegation.

"Somebody had to be overseeing Morrison Knudsen -- the port, the government, somebody," said Gene Voss, a laborer who worked on the project and who is now suing his former employer. "Somewhere, somebody's failed."

"How did this happen?" wondered Neil Thompson of the EPA's Superfund staff.

Morrison Knudsen, which has since merged with another company to become Washington Group International, denies all of the 35 violations alleged by the state to have taken place in late 1999 and early 2000. The company says workers were not endangered, that showers were available, and that leaky drums they handled did not contain hazardous waste. The company also denies that there was any environmental damage.

A company spokesman portrayed the complaining workers as a small group led by a disgruntled former supervisor.

"Our company leads the industry in safety," said Brent Brandon, WGI's vice president for investor relations and corporate communications. "If there's one thing we're known for in the industry, it's safe conduct of operations. That's our calling card."

The ongoing job involves replacing a hodgepodge of old industrial buildings with expanded port facilities at Harbor Island, also known as Terminal Island. Arsenic and the toxic lead were handled in at least two of the old buildings, and the man-made island is pockmarked by spilled oil and other petroleum products.

It was listed in 1983 under the federal Superfund program, a designation meaning it numbered among the nation's most polluted sites.

Job specifications provided to Morrison Knudsen warned that "the entire site has been designated a Superfund site by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). All work under this section will be performed under the appropriate federal and Washington State rules for work at Hazardous Waste Sites."

But Mac Davis, the state Department of Labor and Industries industrial hygienist who issued the citations, later wrote that "in discussion with the safety officer, Bob Johnson, he denied initially that the site was a Superfund site and a designated hazardous waste site. He was not knowledgeable in the (state) hazardous waste standard and was not properly trained to supervise safety concerns on site."

"They perceived it ... as a dirt job, moving dirt around," Davis told the P-I. "Their contention is that all they were doing was construction."

Aaron Owada, a lawyer representing the construction firm, said the company "always acknowledged" that Harbor Island was a Superfund site.

"It was a cleanup site, but it was cleaned up, and after that, it became a construction site," said Owada, a former state assistant attorney general for 17 years who represented Labor and Industries before going into private practice last March.

The Port of Seattle disagrees with the construction company's characterization of the site as having been cleaned up.

"We told Morrison Knudsen 'Harbor Island is a Superfund site,'" said Tom Newlon, a port attorney. "You had to have your head very deep in the sand to not know it was a Superfund site."

As Superfund sites go, Harbor Island is not highly toxic, "not the Valley of the Drums or Love Canal," Newlon said. But, still, "this is an industrial site. You wouldn't want your kids playing in the dirt there, even after the cleanup."

Although the construction company has said the cleanup was finished when the construction work started, it was not, Newlon said.

It's true that some known contamination "hot spots" had been cleaned up -- those where the dirt was so polluted that it had to be treated as hazardous waste and hauled away for treatment, he said. But the plan for dealing with larger and less-polluted areas of contaminated soils, as approved by the EPA, was to simply pave over the dirt so that rainwater would not percolate through and leach out remaining pollutants.

The Port of Seattle is in an unusual situation because, although it owns the land and helped define work conditions, the contract for the job is between the construction company and a port tenant, Stevedoring Services of America.

SSA, which unloads ships, is developing facilities to allow shipping containers to be whisked away by rail. Port officials did arrange for the job specifications to spell out that the port would pay for disposal of any contaminated soils.

"We wanted to create a situation where no one had the incentive to do the wrong thing," Newlon said.

The citations issued by the state, however, charge that Morrison Knudsen:

- Failed to advise employees about procedures for decontaminating themselves.
- Failed to minimize workers' exposure to hazardous substances.
- Failed to evaluate the potential for the job site to harm its employees so they could be issued protective equipment.
- Failed to tell laborers about harmful substances "known or expected to be present."
- Failed to monitor the air on the sometimes-dusty island for the presence of airborne toxins.
- Failed to protect employees from overexposure to lead.
- Failed to arrange for employees with symptoms of possible overexposure to hazardous substances to see a doctor as soon as possible.
- Failed to provide special training to project managers, including the head safety official, about how to work at a Superfund site.

In October, the state ordered that Boise, Idaho-based WGI pay a \$48,500 fine.

WGI denies all charges and is contesting the fine.

"WGI has a very safe and healthy work environment," said Owada, the attorney. "There were no violations. The employees were not exposed to any inappropriate chemicals or hazardous waste. ... They dotted their i's and crossed their t's."

The company says leaky drums the workers were ordered to move had already been tested by the port and no hazardous waste was found. Workers were monitored for contamination, Owada said.

Owada and company spokesman Brandon said the symptoms the workers reported were not consistent with poisoning by lead, which is believed to be the most widespread contaminant on the island. And none of the workers has been successful in pursuing claims for workers' compensation after leaving the job, Brandon and Owada said.

Brandon noted that government agencies began investigating last year based on complaints by a junior foreman at the site, Ron Slater.

"I put these in the category of a disgruntled employee who has other issues," Brandon said.

Slater said he told his supervisors on numerous occasions about lapses in safety and environmental precautions between the time he started the job in November 1999 and when he quit after being demoted last March.

"I was not only demoted when I brought up safety concerns, but I also proved those concerns to the port, (state Department of) Ecology, EPA, and L and I," Slater said.

According to state and federal records, Slater and several other workers who left the job and contacted government agencies allege that the company:

- Ordered contaminated water improperly dumped into storm drains feeding into the Duwamish. The water had been pumped from underground, had a light-brown color, an oily sheen and "an industrial stench," Slater said.

He and another worker, Voss, said Slater's supervisor, Roger Accornero, ordered Voss to pump the water into storm drains.

In sworn testimony last month, Accornero was asked whether he helped Voss dump the water. "No, not me personally," he said. "I don't pump water or tell laborers to. ... I don't like to get dirty."

Thompson of the EPA said there was little his agency could do.

"By the time we found out about it, the action had occurred and it (the water) was gone," Thompson said. "If it went down the drain and got out into the bay, it didn't create a problem that was identifiable and measurable at the time," such as a large slick, he said. Thompson said, however, that it's clear the company was required to test the water, but did not.

"Yeah, it was wrong," Thompson said.

- Hauled truckloads of contaminated soil to a Maple Valley company that sells topsoil. Months later, technicians took a number of samples from that company's 20- to 25-foot-high stockpile, which contained about 15,000 to 20,000 cubic yards of dirt. They did not identify any hazardous waste in the pile at that time.

"We couldn't prove that anything contaminated left the site," said Michael Burnett, an EPA investigator. It appears that the soils were not properly tested, said Thompson, of the EPA's Superfund staff. The manager of WGI's construction project, George Harvey, told an EPA investigator "no material should have left the Harbor Island site," records state.

- Failed to remove underground tanks containing petroleum products. Slater said that on several occasions he saw places where fill pipes sticking up from the ground were bulldozed, with the tanks left in place. John Wietfeld, supervisor of the petroleum cleanup unit at the state Department of Ecology's Bellevue office, said the tanks all appeared to be the kind that the businesses on Harbor Island would have used to store heating oil. Such tanks, even if they are quite large, are exempt from the state's Model Toxics Control Act.

"I saw nothing that would have been regulated under the underground storage tank regulation," Wietfeld said. He acknowledged that he could not know about buried tanks, but said it was unlikely WGI would leave those in the ground because later the tanks could later rust and collapse, creating big holes in the ground that would be dangerous for port workers.

A WGI spokesman rejected all the charges.

"We deny the allegations that we did anything to the environment at that site, and we're confident that any kind of inquiry, investigation or lawsuit will prove we didn't do it," said Rod Hunt, a company spokesman.

Some former workers are angry with WGI, saying their health was endangered. Four are suing the company.

"They did not make us aware of what we were dealing with and what we were tracking home to our families," said Henry Eger, an ironworker who labored at the site. Eger said he suffered nosebleeds, migraine headaches and fatigue. More than a half-dozen co-workers had similar complaints, he said. "They told us this was in our heads," Eger said. "It was obvious they were trying to downplay everything."

Slater filed suit, and went to Labor and Industries to challenge his demotion. Slater contended he was discriminated against for bringing up safety concerns. In a Nov. 14 letter, an L and I program manager told Slater "the discrimination complaint is valid."

Said Thompson of the EPA: "It turns out he was probably correct in bringing some things to the attention of his employers. It was clear they needed to upgrade their health and safety."

THE COMPANY

Washington Group International:

- **History:** Created in July 2000 when Morrison Knudsen Corp. bought Raytheon Engineers & Constructors, moving from 12th-largest to fourth-largest globally among construction and engineering firms.
- **Employees:** 38,000
- **Services:** Include construction, hazardous-waste cleanup, engineering and program-management services for environmental, government, mining, power and water-resources markets.
- **Headquarters:** Boise, Idaho.
- **Past projects:** Include San Francisco Bay Bridge, Hoover Dam, Grand Coulee Dam, Lake Washington floating bridges, Interstate 90 construction, Sea-Tac Airport construction, Trans-Alaska Pipeline, Kennedy Space Center.
- **Current and future projects:** Include Harbor Island construction and cleanup of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

P-I reporter Robert McClure can be reached at 206-448-8092 or robertmcclure@seattlepi.com

Seattle Post Intelligence

Soil use being investigated

Wednesday, May 24, 2000

By LEWIS KAMB ✉
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

Between January and March, up to 59 truckloads of potentially contaminated soil were hauled away from a federal Superfund site in Seattle with intentions to mix it into garden topsoil, federal regulators said.

Now, regulators are investigating the contractors of a Port of Seattle expansion project. Those contractors apparently allowed the dirt to be taken without first conducting required tests.

An inspector for the state Department of Labor and Industries said yesterday he is investigating allegations of "unsafe work conditions concerning hazardous waste" against Morrison Knudson, a Boise company coordinating the port authority's Terminal 18 expansion project on Harbor Island.

Citing reasons of confidentiality, L&I compliance inspector Mac Davis said he could not discuss details of the investigation until his inspection is completed within the next five months.

But a spokesman for the Port of Seattle acknowledged yesterday that port officials are cooperating with state and federal inspectors. They are also conducting their own review of the dirt and are looking into whether Morrison Knudson was involved.

And a project manager of the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund site at Harbor Island said yesterday that federal inspectors are examining how the soil managed to be removed without first being analyzed for contaminants.

"We're reviewing whether the process somehow broke down or whether someone intentionally tried to skirt it," EPA Project Manager Neil Thompson said.

John Fischer, a Seattle project manager for Morrison Knudson, referred questions to a company administrator in Boise yesterday. That administrator could not be reached for comment.

The soil in question has since been traced to a stockpile at Pacific Topsoil's facilities in Maple Valley, Thompson said.

Employees for the company, which mixes and sells gardening and landscaping soils, referred questions to property development manager Jim Lindsay, who was out sick yesterday.

"I'm sure Pacific Topsoil's probably wouldn't have wanted it if they thought it might be contaminated," Thompson said. EPA inspectors will test the soil to determine whether it is safe for the company to mix into a marketable grade of gardening soil, or whether it contains unsafe levels of contaminants that require disposal, Thompson said.

For decades, a lead smelter operated on Harbor Island, contaminating its soil on with lead, arsenic and other heavy metals, Thompson said. After the smelter closed in 1980, the EPA designated the area as a Superfund site.

Under an agreement with the Port of Seattle to redevelop the site, the EPA requires that soil and other materials be screened for contamination before leaving the island, Thompson said.

But for whatever reason, that didn't happen between January and March when Pacific Topsoil's apparently hauled away between 35 and 59 truckloads -- from 660 to 1,000 cubic yards -- of Harbor Island soil, Thompson said.

A project worker on the island alerted the agency earlier this month that the soil had been removed without proper testing.

Along with the soil, several truckloads of branches, plant material and other organic material was taken by the topsoil company, Thompson said.

Inspectors are less concerned about that material, because it likely is not contaminated, he said.

But EPA officials are worried about the soil. Topsoil on Harbor Island is known to be contaminated; some of it to degrees that pose serious health risks for people who handle it, Thompson said.

The island's subsurface soils, on the other hand, usually pose little risk and show minimal, if any, contamination, he said.

It is unclear from what part of the island the soil in question came from, Thompson said.

The way the soil is now stockpiled -- beneath dozens of loads of other dirt that has since been dumped on top of it -- people have little chance to come in contact with it, Thompson said. Rain water runoff from the pile also isn't likely to spread any potential contaminants, he said.

EPA inspectors are now preparing tests for the soil, which likely will be analyzed within the next few weeks, Thompson said.

In the meantime, a Port of Seattle spokesman said that port officials are cooperating.

Morrison Knudsen, one of the nation's largest civil engineering firms, is coordinating the port's two-year, \$350-million expansion project of Terminal 18 on Harbor Island.

XX

Judge rejects fine imposed at Superfund site

The state may appeal Morrison Knudsen worker-safety decision

Monday, July 1, 2002

By [ROBERT McCLURE](#)
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

Rejecting a \$48,500 fine imposed by state worker-safety inspectors, a state administrative judge has found that construction giant Morrison Knudsen Corp. did not violate the law while working at a Harbor Island Superfund cleanup site.

The decision vindicates Morrison Knudsen, which had maintained that workers were not endangered and the environment was not threatened by its actions.

The state Department of Labor and Industries alleged in October 2000 that workers at the Port of Seattle-owned site were ordered to move "leaky drums of unknown materials"; that a worker was splashed with chemicals; and, among other charges, that no decontamination showers were provided.

Workers also told government investigators they were ordered to dump thousands of gallons of contaminated water into the Duwamish River. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency investigators who sought evidence of criminal wrongdoing in that incident could not verify that allegation.

The state may appeal the proposed ruling by Assistant Chief Industrial Appeals Judge Mark Jaffe, said Michael Hall, an assistant state attorney general.

"It's a case that will undoubtedly go up through the court system," Hall said shortly before Jaffe ruled recently.

"It's going to be, in all likelihood, a precedent-setting case about the scope of these regulations and whether they apply to work like this. It's undoubtedly going to affect other employers."

Harbor Island, one of the largest manmade islands in the hemisphere, housed an ever-changing series of industries through much of the past century. By the time it was declared a Superfund site in 1983, the island was riddled with contaminants such as lead, arsenic and polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs.

Morrison Knudsen and its parent, Boise-based Washington Group International, argued that because contamination "hot spots" had been removed before its construction of a shipping terminal, the site should not fall under state worker-safety rules covering hazardous-waste sites.

Judge Jaffe agreed.

The case turned, Jaffe wrote, on whether Harbor Island could be considered an "uncontrolled hazardous waste site" at the time of the work. Because an environmental engineering firm had previously documented the hot spot locations, assessed the risks and shown how the cleanup should be done, the site was not "uncontrolled," he wrote.

Work crews did find contaminated soils and stockpile them for removal, and capped other contaminated soils with asphalt, Jaffe wrote.

"The question is if these activities, alone, are enough to subject Morrison Knudsen" to rules covering hazardous-waste cleanup operations, Jaffe wrote. "I do not believe they are enough based on the language in the definition of a cleanup operation in the regulation.

"The operative phrase in the definition is 'with the ultimate goal of making the site safer for people or the environment.' The record does not support findings that this was the case with this project."

Jaffe also rejected the state's arguments that the job specifications identified the work as taking place on a hazardous-waste site, and that Morrison Knudsen sought tax breaks granted to companies that clean up such sites.

During proceedings before Jaffe earlier this year, a doctor specializing in occupational health testified on behalf of Morrison Knudsen, saying the worksite was safe.

"Safety is our No. 1 priority," said Katrina Puett, representing Washington Group International. "We're pleased with the apparent outcome of this."

Hall, the assistant attorney general, said he still believes the company should have treated the site as a hazardous-waste cleanup.

"When they bid for the job, they told the port they were doing hazardous-waste cleanup, and they applied to the city of Seattle for tax breaks on the basis that they were doing hazardous-waste cleanup," Hall said.

Ron Slater, a foreman fired after he and his workers brought what they considered dangerous conditions to the state's attention, is seeking reinstatement and three years' back pay. The state found he was improperly dismissed for reporting suspected violations of the law.

Slater's case may be complicated by the fact that Washington Group International filed for bankruptcy after Slater was fired, said Carrie Hoon, an assistant attorney general. The firm emerged from bankruptcy in January.

Slater said he believes Jaffe's decision will be overturned by the three-person Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals.

"The citations reflect not only Morrison Knudsen's attitude toward the men, but also their attitude toward the environment," Slater said. "I have never seen such arrogance and disdain for the proper protection of all of us."

P-I reporter Robert McClure can be reached at 206-448-8092 or robertmcclure@seattlepi.com

XX

Wednesday, August 17, 2005

**Workers get win in hazardous site case
Company knew of risk on Harbor Island, judges rule**

By **ROBERT McCLURE**
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

Whistle-blowers, who reported unsafe work practices on a Harbor Island construction job, including exposure to hazardous wastes, have won a second round in court.

Morrison Knudsen Corp. knew that the work it took on at Harbor Island involved a Superfund site that needed special handling, the state Court of Appeals ruled.

The company, now a subsidiary of the mammoth Washington Group International, has steadfastly maintained that it was merely doing construction on a site that already had been cleaned up by the Port of Seattle.

Not so, the court decided.

"There is no evidence in the record to support a conclusion that Harbor Island does not continue to be a specific threat to the health and safety of individuals or the environment," the three-judge panel said in its unanimous decision Tuesday. "In fact, admissions by Morrison Knudsen belie its argument that this was not a hazardous waste operation."

The chief whistle-blower, former Morrison Knudsen construction foreman Ron Slater, said he feels vindicated.

"I was not wrong when I went to the authorities," Slater said. "I also was not wrong (to report) we were exposing -- digging -- lethal, nasty dirt, and there were orders to bury it to expedite the project."

The state Department of Labor and Industries cited the company. Among the charges were that Morrison Knudsen workers in late 1999 and early 2000 were ordered to move "leaky drums of unknown materials," that a worker was splashed with the chemicals and that no decontamination showers were provided.

The court ruling upholds the findings a year ago of King County Superior Court Judge John Erlick, who agreed that the state's charges had been properly filed. His decision reversed the findings of the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals, which found that the operation was not governed under work rules covering hazardous wastes.

Morrison Knudsen was revitalizing an old industrial area so it could be used by a Port tenant, Stevedoring Services of America. The facilities were intended to allow shipping containers to be quickly moved off ships for rail transportation.

Calls to Morrison Knudsen's attorney, Aaron Owada, were not returned Tuesday. Nor was a call Tuesday evening to Washington Group's Idaho headquarters.

Owada has said previously that Morrison Knudsen was told by the Port that all known hazardous waste had been removed before the construction began.

Morrison Knudsen was instructed to be on the lookout for more contaminated dirt, Owada has said, and it did that. The state did not take samples of dirt or water, he has said, so state officials can't say how contaminated the property was before Morrison Knudsen laid asphalt over it, as laid out in the cleanup plan.

Slater, the whistle-blower, described the waste uncovered by his crews as "sticky and gooey" dirt with rainbow and copper hues.

"It was rancid," Slater said. "It had a machine chemical smell. ... That was all reburied, every bit of it. It's on the bottom and it's coming to the (Puget) Sound."

Workers also reported to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that they were ordered to dump thousands of gallons of contaminated water into Elliott Bay. EPA criminal investigators could not verify that allegation. Morrison Knudsen denies it.

Slater, 62, was unable to get another job as a construction supervisor after the state brought the charges against Morrison Knudsen. He eventually landed a spot as a heavy-equipment operator, he said, but was later hurt in a work-related accident that ended his career early.

Slater on Tuesday was doing work on property near Ellensburg that he said he is being forced to sell to keep himself financially solvent.

"That's the price you pay when you go against the grain," he said.

The key issue in the case before the appeals court was whether Morrison Knudsen's construction force was governed under state workplace rules governing an "uncontrolled hazardous-waste site."

Since the main cleanup already was done, the site was controlled, the company has argued.

No so, the court ruled.

"While the contract ... did not specifically require Morrison Knudsen to engage in a full-blown hazardous waste cleanup operation, the contract contemplated that hazardous waste would be handled," the court said.

P-I reporter Robert McClure can be reached at 206-448-8092 or robertmclure@seattlepi.com

XX

Wednesday, August 18, 2004

**Judge backs Harbor Island fine
He reverses Superfund site ruling in case involving worker safety**

By **ROBERT McCLURE**
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

A new court ruling backs a \$48,500 fine that state inspectors levied against a major construction firm for dozens of worker-safety violations at the Port of Seattle's Harbor Island Superfund site.

The ruling against Washington Group International comes more than four years after a construction foreman reported to authorities that workers' health was endangered and pollution had been unleashed into Elliott Bay. The company continues to deny the charges. It will appeal the ruling by King County Superior Court Judge John Erlick.

Erlick overruled a state administrative judge who had sided with the company, calling the previous ruling illogical.

"I'm healing, but it's been a long 4 1/2 years," said Ron Slater, the construction foreman who alerted government officials to problems at the job site but later saw his career sidelined. Slater said he doesn't regret his actions. "If I let them get away with what they did, I don't see how I can live with myself."

At the time of the citations, workers complained that they had been subject to headaches, fatigue and nosebleeds, but were ignored.

The state Department of Labor and Industries, which brought the charges, was represented by Assistant Attorney General Michael Hall.

"We're elated," Hall said. "The Superior Court's decision is unambiguous and strong."

Washington Group is one of the two biggest financial partners in a consortium of companies that is the lone bidder to design, build and operate Seattle's new monorail. The firm also is a key subcontractor on the plutonium-finishing plant on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. The work at Harbor Island was done by Morrison Knudsen, a Washington Group subsidiary.

The state, in citations issued to the company, said workers were ordered to move "leaky drums of unknown materials"; that a worker was splashed with the chemicals; and that no decontamination showers were provided. The company denies all the charges.

The case turned on whether Harbor Island was an "uncontrolled hazardous-waste site" under state regulations at the time of the work. By then, other contractors had removed known pollution "hot spots" under a legal settlement between the port and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But, because wastes had been dumped for decades by a hodgepodge of companies on the island, it wasn't clear whether additional pollution hot spots would be encountered.

Slater says they were, and he and his men were ordered to cover up any problems. Washington Group denies this.

"The Port of Seattle had told us all the known hazardous waste had been removed. We said that's great and also, there might be a potential there could be more hazards ... and we had to be on our watch," said Aaron Owada, an attorney for Washington Group.

As a result, the company took pains to control dust at the site that could spread around contaminants and monitored levels of lead in workers, finding no problems, he said. The state never took samples of dirt or water, so it can't say how contaminated the property was before Washington Group laid asphalt over it as outlined in the cleanup plan, Owada said.

"We felt the case citations should never have been issued," Owada said. "We had demonstrated that we had everything under control."

Both sides agree that the case will set a precedent for how construction firms must operate in Washington on old waste sites.

Washington Group argued that much more was happening than fixing up an old waste site. A whole new batch of facilities were being built for unloading containers from cargo ships. The company said it was doing regular construction work, not hazardous-waste cleanup.

But the state argued that just because something more than the required cleanup work was going on didn't mean Washington Group had any less of an obligation to protect its workers.

"It is incongruous and illogical that (state regulations) should be interpreted such that two employees, engaging in the precise same work, exposed to the precise same hazards, mandated by the same consent decree, should have different protection," the judge ruled, overturning a decision by Assistant Chief Industrial Appeals Judge Mark Jaffe.

Among the evidence the state presented to show that the firm understood its obligations were statements the company made to the state Department of Revenue seeking tax breaks for doing environmental cleanup work.

For instance, a June 5, 2000, submission by the company states the site was contaminated by lead, arsenic, cadmium and other hazardous substances "and must be remediated under order of the EPA."

"I've only got a high school education, but I can read," said Slater, a former member of the Navy's Seabees battlefield-construction unit. "These hazardous-waste sites are very defined, very clear."

Slater, of Cle Elum, has since retired due to unrelated medical problems. But he says whistle-blowers like him are necessary to help the government keep an eye on firms doing its work.

"That is your river and your property, Terminal 18, and if somebody doesn't open their mouth, you're not going to hear about it," Slater said.

Monorail spokeswoman Natasha Jones declined to say whether her agency would require any more assurances about Washington Group's monorail bid before it awards the contract.

"At this point the (bid) has gone out, and the proposal has been received. We're going to evaluate it. I can't say any more beyond that," Jones said.

She also could not say whether the agency knew of the Harbor Island incident before Washington Group was qualified to bid and submitted its proposal.

"We can't respond to any projects that the contractor team may have worked on in the past."

P-I reporter Larry Lange contributed to this report. P-I reporter Robert McClure can be reached at 206-448-8092 or robertmclure@seattlepi.com



Seattle Times -

Fine upheld for firm's work at cleanup site

By [Ian Ith](#)

Seattle Times staff reporter

A King County Superior Court judge has upheld \$48,500 worth of state citations against an Idaho construction contractor that allegedly exposed workers to dangerous contaminants during work at a Superfund **cleanup site** on Seattle's Harbor Island four years ago.

The company continues to deny it committed the violations, and a spokesman yesterday said it will keep fighting the citations.

Judge John Erlick last week ruled that Washington Group International of Boise, then operating as Morrison Knudsen, was required to abide by strict workplace-safety rules during an expansion project at Terminal 18.

Harbor Island has been listed as a Superfund **site** since 1983 because of high levels of pollution including arsenic, lead and carcinogenic polychlorinated biphenyls — PCBs.

After an assistant superintendent for Morrison Knudsen, Ron Slater, reported to the state that workers were being sickened by exposure to hazardous waste, the state Department of Labor and Industries in 2000 issued the fine, alleging 34 violations.

The department found that workers were required to move leaking drums of hazardous chemicals with no protective clothing, that the company provided no decontamination facilities, and that it didn't monitor air and soil for toxins and had no emergency plan.

Slater also had alleged the company was forcing workers to pump highly contaminated water from holding ponds directly into the waterway. But government inspectors couldn't verify that.

Labor and Industries also ordered Morrison Knudsen to pay \$140,000 in back pay for firing Slater after he blew the whistle. But the company went bankrupt and merged with Washington Group International, so Slater never got paid.

The company contested the citations to an industrial-appeals board, arguing it wasn't required to follow hazardous-waste rules because it hadn't been performing **cleanup** work but rather simple construction for the Port of Seattle's terminal expansion.

In 2002, the board agreed the rules didn't apply and dropped the citations.

Judge Erlick ruled last week, however, that the company clearly was engaged in a hazardous-waste **cleanup** and should have followed the rules.

Washington Group can appeal Erlick's ruling to the state Appeals Court. Otherwise the case will go back to the industrial-appeals board for a finding of whether the company actually committed the violations.

"We're convinced that if this goes back for a retrial, we'll prevail," said Jack Hermann, a Washington Group spokesman in Boise.

Even so, Slater, 62, now retired in Cle Elum, Kittitas County, said he felt vindicated by Erlick's ruling. He contends he was blacklisted from construction work after the episode. He had to drop his lawsuit against the company after it went bankrupt.

"It means all my fellow employees, all my friends — and my enemies — know that I wasn't wrong," he said.

"I am not a disgruntled employee. I am an honest, considerate and professional employee."

Ian Ith: 206-464-2109 or iith@seattletimes.com



Hanford contractor declares bankruptcy

This story was published Tue, May 15, 2001

By John Stang and Mary Hopkin Herald staff writers

Washington Group International -- a major player at Hanford's waste glassification project and the Umatilla Chemical Depot -- filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy Monday to try regain its financial footing.

The Chapter 11 reorganization is not expected to affect Hanford's glassification project nor the construction of Umatilla's nerve gas incinerator, said corporate and federal officials.

Boise-based Washington Group announced Monday that it had filed the petition to restructure itself in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Reno, Nev.

The corporation is one of the nation's largest construction firms with 17,821 employees in 97 subsidiaries plus 68 limited and joint ventures, according to its bankruptcy filing. It began in 1964 as a three-person highway construction company in Missoula, Mont.

Employee salaries and benefits at both Mid-Columbia projects will be protected under the reorganization, said Washington Group spokesman Jack Herman.

Washington Group is the chief Hanford subcontractor for Bechtel National, which is in charge of designing, building and testing Hanford's top-priority glassification project through 2011. The facility is supposed to convert at least 10 percent of the site's 53 million gallons of radioactive tank wastes into glass by 2018.

The bankruptcy proceedings will not affect ongoing hiring at the glassification project nor the pace of its construction, said Bechtel spokesman John Britton. The project currently employs 950 people with 110 working for Washington Group. It is supposed to employ about 4,400 people - mostly short-term construction workers under Bechtel - by 2004.

Washington Group's role in the project is to provide technical expertise from glassification projects at Savannah River, S.C., and West Valley, N.Y. Washington Group absorbed those projects in 1999 when it bought them from Westinghouse Electric Co.

Washington Group's problems should not affect its role under Bechtel, nor Bechtel's contract with the Department of Energy, said Britton, Herman and DOE spokesman Erik Olds.

Washington Group also is in charge of building and operating an incinerator to destroy 7.4 million pounds of deadly nerve and mustard gas agents at the Army's chemical depot in Umatilla. The company took over the project when it bought Raytheon Engineers & Constructors from Raytheon Co. in July 2000.

In Umatilla, Washington Group employs about 500 workers. Incineration is supposed to begin in 2002, and the bankruptcy filing won't affect that deadline, said Chris Early, a Washington Group spokesman in Umatilla.

"We have no reason to believe that the project won't continue and be completed," said Army spokeswoman Mary Binder.

In its bankruptcy filings, Washington Group blamed Raytheon for its financial woes.

On March 8, Washington Group filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Idaho, alleging Raytheon committed fraud when it sold Raytheon Engineers & Constructors' about 200 projects to Washington Group. Washington Group paid \$53 million to Raytheon and assumed about \$450 million in liabilities.

Washington Group claims Raytheon did not disclose all of its liabilities on the projects it sold. That led to huge cash-flow problems for Washington Group, the company's court filings said. Herman said Raytheon's Umatilla project did not contribute to those troubles.

Raytheon claims it was frank with Washington Group about its finances, that Washington Group fumbled in obtaining all pertinent information and that Washington Group tried to absorb more than it could handle with the purchase.

The Securities and Exchange Commission is looking into the transaction.

Herman said most of Washington Group's managers and corporate structure will remain in place.

The changes will be in Washington Group's power-production businesses, with two New England gas-fired power plant projects potentially facing shutdown.

Under the proposed reorganization, Washington Group's creditors effectively will become the corporation's stockholders. The reorganization could take about four months, Herman said. The reorganization will set aside \$20 million to pursue the litigation against Raytheon.

On Monday, the New York Stock Exchange removed Washington Group's stock from its listing.

In the mid-1990s, then Washington Construction Co. began an expansion that included a push into federal radioactive waste cleanup.

The company merged with bankrupt Boise-based Morrison Knudsen Co. in 1996, keeping the Morrison Knudsen name.

In 1999, Morrison Knudsen bought the Westinghouse segment that handled DOE contracts at West Valley, Savannah River and the underground national radioactive waste storage site at Carlsbad, N.M.

In July 2000, Morrison Knudsen bought and merged with the Raytheon subsidiary, Raytheon Engineers & Constructors - becoming Washington Group International.

Copyright 2001 Tri-City Herald. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

The New York Times

ON THE WEB

May 15, 2001

A Leading Construction Company Files for Chapter 11

By MICHAEL BRICK

The Washington Group International, one of the nation's - largest construction companies, filed for bankruptcy protection yesterday and settled in for a long fight with the **Raytheon** Company, which it has accused of misrepresenting the financial condition of a unit that Washington bought from it last year.

Washington, which is based in Boise, Idaho, said it would continue to operate and pay its workers. The Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing, made in a Nevada federal court, included the parent company and 22 subsidiaries, which together employ around 17,000 people. As many as 70 other subsidiaries, joint ventures and partnerships, employing another 18,000 people, are not involved in the bankruptcy, the company said.

The company, formerly known as Morrison Knudsen, said that its stockholders could expect to recover nothing and that its secured creditors would own the equity assets of the reassembled company. Unsecured creditors, the company said, would be paid either through the normal course of business or upon confirmation of the plan.

Washington said it sought bankruptcy protection because of a cash- flow crisis resulting from cost overruns on some contracts and lower- than-expected profits on other contracts from the unit it acquired from Raytheon. The company has sued Raytheon, accusing it of fraud and is seeking to unwind its purchase of the unit. The deal did not include a breakup fee.

"The wheels of justice just move slowly," Stephen G. Hanks, the company's president, said in a telephone interview. "We are funding these undisclosed losses at the clip of \$100 million a month and we are simply out of cash."

In its filing, Washington listed assets of \$3.8 billion and liabilities of approximately \$3.3 billion.

Mr. Hanks said that he expected that the reorganization would take four to six months to complete. In about two months, the company will disclose the specific conditions of the terms of the bankruptcy for unsecured creditors, who will most likely object, he said.

Credit Suisse First Boston, which lent the company \$1 billion to buy the Raytheon unit, agreed to lead a group of lenders that would supply the company with money while it reorganized under bankruptcy protection.

Dennis R. Washington, the company's chairman and chief executive, is one of the stockholders likely to lose out in the reorganization. Mr. Washington, who built his fortune acquiring troubled concerns, owned about 40 percent of the Washington Group's stock. The company's statement made no mention of Mr. Washington, though a person who answered the phone in the company's executive offices said he remained the company's chairman. He did not return a call seeking comment.

Through the 1990's, Mr. Washington expanded Morrison Knudsen in an industry where mergers are uncommon because companies are reluctant to acquire contract backlogs. Washington's acquisition of the Raytheon unit, Raytheon Engineers and Constructors, for \$53 million in July, and the company's assumption of \$450 million of the unit's debt, starkly illuminated that danger.

In its lawsuit, Washington said the Raytheon unit produced \$700 million in debt instead of the \$450 million Washington had expected. The company said it would continue the legal battle against Raytheon.

“What you'd like to see happen is some huge recovery out of Raytheon, but that seems unlikely,” said John B. Rogers, a construction industry analyst for D. A. Davidson & Company, a regional brokerage firm based in Great Falls, Mont.

Raytheon has denied Washington's fraud claim, saying Washington studied the engineering unit and its financial books for many months before buying it. Earlier this month, Raytheon said the Securities and Exchange Commission had subpoenaed documents related to the unit.

David Polk, a Raytheon spokesman, said the unit that Raytheon sold to Washington had guaranteed its customers that it would complete 50 projects that the unit had undertaken at the time of the sale, including 33 maintenance contracts that he said exposed Raytheon to a negligible amount of liability.

Raytheon, however, took a \$325 million charge in its first quarter to cover the cost of completing two construction projects Washington had halted, and it has said in filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission that the remaining 15 guaranteed engineering and construction projects may expose Raytheon to an additional \$125 million in liabilities if Washington halts them.

Washington, which generated more than \$5 billion in revenues last year, plans to continue seeking new projects. An analyst for Standard & Poor's, which yesterday lowered a rating of the company's debt to default, wrote on March 9 that the company's troubles, including a decision to drop two of the projects it inherited from Raytheon, “may constrain its ability to successfully bid on new projects.”

The same analyst, Joel Levington, wrote on March 19 that Washington's decision to drop out of a joint venture's bid on a civil engineering project in Colorado and failure to announce any new projects seemed to show that the company's market position was weakening.

For Washington, the eventual emergence from bankruptcy will depend, in large part, on the path preferred by the company's creditors. A person close to the creditors said that they had identified no one who was interested in buying Washington outright and that they would most likely seek to sell some assets.

Mr. Hanks, who joined Morrison Knudsen in its legal department in 1978 and has worked for the company ever since, said the strength of the construction market provided hope for the business.

"If the company fails to succeed, it will be because management failed, not because the people out there building these projects failed," Mr. Hanks said.

As Corps Widens Reach, a Cleanup Turns Messy

Crime Probe Targets Contractor at Top Toxic Site

By Michael Gruwald

Washington Post Staff Writer

Monday, May 22, 2000; Page A01

PICHER, Okla. - The nation's largest lead and zinc mines were abandoned years ago beneath this forgotten pocket of the Plains, but their toxic legacy persists on the surface. The hollowed earth still bleeds acid into Tar Creek, tinting its lifeless waters rust-orange. There are orange turtles, too, stained by their poisoned habitat. Gray mountains of gravelly lead waste tower over the table-flat landscape, adding to the ominous science-fiction aura. Even more ominous: A third of the area's children have been lead-poisoned, 15 times the state average.

Today, the shuttered lead mines have become a gold mine of sorts, as the federal government spends \$30 million on a long-overdue cleanup. But for the impoverished residents of the Tar Creek area, that has turned toxic, too.

The Army Corps of Engineers is managing the effort to get the lead out of soils around Tar Creek, which the Environmental Protection Agency ranks as the most polluted site in its Superfund industrial-waste cleanup program. But the project has been plagued by cost overruns, time delays, complaints of shoddy work--and a broad criminal investigation.

Federal investigators confirmed that they are probing allegations of widespread accounting and performance fraud by the Corps-hired contractor on the job, Morrison Knudsen Corp. Investigators from the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, FBI and EPA are poring over about 400 boxes of project documents seized in a February raid and are probing whether company officials may have falsified records, overbilled the government, cut environmental corners and covered up safety mishaps, according to sources close to the investigation.

The owners of a firm that hauled lead-tainted dirt for the project have already pleaded guilty to obtaining phony safety certificates for their truckers, and a federal grand jury began hearing more serious allegations May 2 in Tulsa. Meanwhile, the cleanup's problems continue to mount. A local Indian tribe just produced soil tests suggesting that parts of its sacred powwow grounds may have higher lead levels now than before they were decontaminated.

Morrison Knudsen officials said they are cooperating with investigators and are unaware of any wrongdoing by the company. "From everything I've been told, it's been a very successful project," said John Roberts, the firm's director of corporate administration. "Until the investigation is complete, it really wouldn't be appropriate for us to comment further."

The documented problems at Tar Creek suggest that the government is having a terrible time decontaminating the nation's worst-rated industrial waste site. But they also raise broader questions about the steadily expanding missions of the Army Corps of Engineers, a Pentagon-based agency with 37,000 employees—a larger work force than that of Microsoft Corp.

On April 28, the Corps announced that it will quit the Tar Creek project this summer, at the end of its current contract but long before the end of the job. The agency pronounced its mission

complete, citing a dramatic reduction in children's blood-lead levels over the last five years. "We've pretty much fulfilled our part and gotten kudos for the cleanup work," a spokesman said.

But in interviews here in northeast Oklahoma, EPA regulators, local officials, homeowners, federal investigators, Morrison Knudsen whistleblowers and the area's congressman all accused the Corps of lax oversight. And although the Corps said in a statement that by leaving it was merely "paving the way for EPA to implement new contracting strategies," EPA officials said they were preparing to oust the Corps from the cleanup when it agreed to leave. They pointed out that they assigned the Corps to make sure work was done on time, costs were controlled and local residents were satisfied—none of which appears to have happened.

"This project has been a disaster, start to finish," said Joe Crawford, a county official who recently threatened to shut down the cleanup by banning heavy trucks from local roads. "The Corps and the contractor are making out like bandits, but we're worse off than ever."

'Mission Creep'

These days, some of the agency's most reliable supporters in the construction industry are starting to question "mission creep" at the Corps, arguing that the agency has stretched itself far too thin. The Corps used to focus its energy on water projects such as locks, dams and levees, but in recent years it has found work in a host of other areas, from construction of schools and wastewater treatment plants to cleanup of nuclear and industrial waste.

This bureaucratic reinvention has come under heavy scrutiny, especially after internal Corps documents revealed a "Project Growth Initiative" designed to boost its \$4 billion budget by 50 percent. And the official Web site of the agency's Tulsa District, which managed the Tar Creek contract, provides further evidence of an all-out growth campaign: "We will willingly accept work for the Corps, wherever it may be. . . We will market our capabilities and seek growth opportunities."

The Corps has found Superfund a particularly fruitful growth opportunity. In 1982, the first year of the federal program designed to clean up America's worst toxic waste sites, the Corps did \$12 million worth of Superfund work for EPA. Last year's total was \$300 million. For its work hiring and overseeing contractors who hire and oversee subcontractors, the Corps keeps a cut of the EPA payments: at Tar Creek, it has earned \$1.7 million.

The Corps says it does not compete with the private sector, but many firms believe they are perfectly qualified to handle the Superfund work. "The Corps wants to be the program manager for America," complained Construction Management Association of America director Bruce D'Agostino, a leader of a new industry alliance battling expansionism at the Corps. "They're competing with the private sector all over the country."

Corps officials say their growth efforts have been misunderstood: They don't want new work for its own sake, but to expand their service to the nation. They say the public-minded oversight they provide for Superfund cannot be replicated by profit-minded firms. "If we weren't good,

EPA wouldn't keep hiring us," says Corps spokesman David Hewitt. "If we weren't good, Congress and the administration wouldn't keep adding to our missions."

At Tar Creek, though, the EPA just hired a private firm to replace the Corps.

"The Corps is a perfect example of a perpetual bureaucracy; they just want more and more work for themselves," said Rep. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), a conservative firebrand who represents the Tar Creek area, and calls its cleanup the worst example of government mismanagement he has ever seen. "We all end up getting ripped off; you, me, every American taxpayer."

'Pesthole on the Plains'

In December 1939, a muckraking magazine story on the "Pesthole on the Plains" chronicled the desperation of the Tri-State Mining District. "Perhaps nowhere else in America could one find such extreme poverty, undernourishment and insanitary conditions," the story concluded.

That was during the good times. In those days, this isolated chunk of Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri churned out nearly a million tons of lead and zinc ore a year, supplying raw material for America's bullets and baby powders, washtubs and paints,

But the mines closed for good in the 1970s, and the Pesthole on the Plains began withering away. The population plunged by 90 percent. Entire towns virtually vanished. The area's only remaining resource was the ugly piles of lead waste known as chat, which entrepreneurs began selling as fill for roads, yards, ball fields and playgrounds.

Picher kids had always played on the chat piles; Mickey Mantle (from neighboring Commerce) used to roll down them as a boy. But much of the chat turned out to be contaminated, which helped fuel the area's second economic vestige of the mining era: the government cleanup.

"This area, was so desperate for help; we're talking about people who had nothing," said Rebecca Jim, a local environmental activist who has organized tongue-in-cheek "fishing tournaments" to call attention to the plight of Tar Creek. "They were at the mercy of the government, and the government betrayed them."

EPA has always ranked the Tar Creek site at the top of its Superfund priority list, even ahead of New York's Love Canal. But the site mostly languished until the mid-1990s, when tests revealed a lead-poisoning epidemic among local children, especially Native American children.

EPA then announced a major initiative to remove lead-contaminated soil from more than 2,000 properties in five Oklahoma towns and hired the Corps to oversee the work. The Corps, in turn, awarded the contract to Morrison Knudsen, a Boise-based construction conglomerate that has operations in 35 countries and recent Corps projects in seven states.

This was no ordinary contract. The Clinton administration had designated Tar Creek as a pilot project for a new kind of "cost-plus" contract; a Corps newsletter proudly announced that "Tulsa District is once again blazing a trail—this time through contracting territory." Morrison Knudsen was promised reimbursement for all project expenses up to a set ceiling, plus performance-based bonuses of up to 9 percent of the total costs. The setup put an especially high premium on strict oversight, since it reduced the contractor's usual incentive to control costs. But the newsletter

predicted a win-win scenario: "The government should experience fewer cost overruns, schedule delays and performance problems."

It didn't quite work that way.

Cost overruns? Last spring, a detailed analysis by Rep. Coburn found the Tar Creek cleanup was twice as expensive per property as a similar lead-removal effort by the Corps in nearby Joplin, Mo. Schedule delays? Despite the heavy spending, Tar Creek was way behind schedule, while Joplin was on time. Performance problems? Eighteen percent of the affected residents filed formal complaints about the cleanup work; community leaders believe the crews caused widespread flood damage by replacing contaminated topsoil with less absorbent clay.

Morrison Knudsen declined to respond to the detailed charges about its performance, referring questions to the Corps. The Corps said that Coburn's cost comparisons are unfair, that Tar Creek and Joplin are different projects. But EPA officials acknowledge that the experiment did not work the way they hoped. "Obviously, we would have liked to see more focus on cost control," said Bill Honker, who oversees Superfund for the EPA in Oklahoma. "We would have liked to see more responsiveness to the public. It's been a learning experience."

For many families living in the ramshackle houses and rusty trailers scattered around these flatlands, the experience has included the inadvertent creation of new ponds in their yards. Don Patterson has lived on Ella Street in Picher for 31 years with his wife and their autistic daughter, and says they never had drainage problems before the cleanup began. Now their lawn floods every time it rains. They say Morrison Knudsen's crews came back to fix their work four times, but to no avail.

Mayor Sam Freeman of Picher, a once-sprawling mining center that has dwindled to about 1,500 predominantly elderly and overwhelmingly poor residents, says scores of his constituents have had similar problems. Many now have mold growing in their homes.

"They know this is a poor town, so they figure they can do whatever they want and the government will keep paying and nobody will complain," said Patterson, 67, a retired mechanic, "I don't know. You can tell something's not happening right."

Record Rainfall or Fraud?

An extraordinary weather disturbance was documented in Picher last winter; 53 consecutive days of rain. And the documents detailing this torrential storm suggest an even more amazing phenomenon. The 53-day streak was limited to a single vacant lot at 203 South Treece St.

Oddly, though, no one in town seems to remember this unprecedented downpour. And weather records confirm that the area received only average rainfall during the period in question. That's why federal investigators say they are suspicious of the documents that Morrison Knudsen submitted to the Corps to receive its payment for 203 South Treece St. Under its cost-plus contract, the company was entitled to a \$959 bonus if it decontaminated the lot within 11 days. In reality, it spent 63 days at the property. But the firm claimed it lost 53 straight workdays to rain--just enough to qualify for the bonus. The Corps would not discuss the case, citing the investigation, but a Corps official did approve every rain day.

“It didn’t rain that much on Noah,” said a disenchanted former Morrison Knudsen employee who allowed a Post reporter to view the documents.

Investigators say they are working closely with the Morrison Knudsen whistleblowers, who have accused their former employers of a series of fraudulent activities. For example:

- The firm’s payments depended in part on the volume of dirt it moved and it calculated that volume by counting truck runs. But sources say several truckers told investigators they carried “light loads” and even “ghost loads.” Investigators also have videos and photos of Morrison Knudsen crews removing dirt at properties the whistleblowers say were already clean.
- In a written statement, the Corps responded that it did reduce some of the contractor’s fees because of various “shortcomings.” But the agency also said that its quality assurance reviews “found the contractor’s data to be accurate” and that the main problems with the project were caused by forces beyond the cleanup team’s control: lousy drainage, aging infrastructure, terrible weather and “the extensive nature of the contamination.”
- Morrison Knudsen’s flawless safety record also increased its bonuses. But sources say several workers who were injured on the job—including one who needed surgery—have told investigators they were kept on the payroll when they could not work.

“We know of no instances where personnel were unable to perform duties of their trade, although there may have been light duty assignments as a result of minor strains, which is common in the industry,” the Corps responded.

- Investigators also suspect the company may have billed the Tar Creek project for work it did for the Corps at other sites where its costs were not reimbursed. The whistleblowers flagged several contracts with vendors they never saw at the site.

The Corps said it has not found any improper contracts. Its auditors are reviewing the invoices.

Critics of the cleanup also complained about more routine management issues, citing employees with no technical expertise, excavation errors fixed at taxpayer expense and a dump built along a stream that empties into Tar Creek. They were particularly vocal about wasteful spending: Coburn compiled evidence that last spring, the project had three times as many workers, six times as much equipment, and eight times as many vehicles as the similar Joplin operation 30 miles away. One whistleblower said a Morrison Knudsen manager even urged staff not to use the company’s toll-free number, since the government was reimbursing all long-distance calls. “There was zero emphasis on cost control,” he recalls.

The Corps said that overall, it is meeting its original goal of \$20,000 per clean property. “The Tulsa District is doing a good job of overseeing this contract.”

The Quapaw tribe, however, recently retested its powwow grounds after Morrison Knudsen reported that they were clean. Five of the tribe’s 15 samples tested hotter than the maximum allowable lead levels, and one of those samples was more than 500 percent over the limit. EPA and the Corps questioned the tribe’s sampling methods, but they agreed to retest the site.

“The samples speak for themselves,” says Earl Hatley, the tribe's environmental director. “A child playing in one of those hot spots can get sick. It's that simple.”

A Creek the Color of Tang

“There's no fish in the orange creek!” shouted 4-year-old Zachary Whitlock, a bouncy little boy in the Little Angels day-care program. “Only dead fish!”

Zachary was sharing what he learned in Jessica Sage's lead education class, a 15-minute effort to teach the kids the rules of life in the Tri-State Mining District. Don't go sledding or tumbling or bike-riding on the chat piles. Don't eat dirt. And never, ever drink out of Tar Creek, it may look like Tang, but it isn't.

The Tar Creek cleanup was supposed to be about helping kids like Zachary. And the area's lead-poisoning numbers have dropped 40 percent since 1994. But it is hard to know whether the major factor was the cleanup or lead education programs like this one. Sage, for one, credits the programs, although she admits she's biased. The cleanup ruined her family's drainage. “You walk on my lawn, you sink to your knees,” she says. “It was a total botch job.”

The Corps has heard that a lot in recent months. Internal whistleblowers, taxpayer activists and environmentalists have leveled a series of charges about wasteful projects, environmental destruction, rigged analyses and overall mission creep. The EPA is conducting a criminal probe of a Corps nuclear waste cleanup near Buffalo; the Pentagon is investigating charges that top Corps officials manipulated the data of a \$54 million Mississippi River study to justify huge navigation projects. Even a few of the agency's traditional allies in Congress have questioned the growth strategy at the Corps.

Nevertheless, the Corps seems poised for new expansion. Congress is preparing to put it in charge of a \$7.8 billion effort to restore the Florida Everglades. The administration is also pushing several new Corps initiatives, including one to clean up contaminated urban “brownfields” and another to renovate aging recreational facilities. And a recent House resolution said the National Park Service “should immediately take full advantage of support services offered by the Department of Defense” to reduce its construction backlog.

“I don't think they were talking about the Special Forces,” one lobbyist quipped.

The recent controversies have prompted a lot of talk about Corps reforms, and Army Secretary Louis Caldera recently tried to reassert civilian control of the agency. But Caldera withdrew his reforms after just a week, under heavy pressure from Republican senators. And this week, the Senate may take up a farm bill that includes a rider prohibiting this or any future administration from making any changes whatsoever at the Corps.

Here in Picher, though, the Corps is winding down its work, and some folks say they can't wait to see the agency leave. Oval “Hoppy” Ray, an ex-miner who runs what may be America's only combination mining museum and pool hall, and whose lawn now gets ankle-deep after light rains, said he wouldn't trust the Corps again to rake his yard, much less decontaminate it.

“They screwed up everything they touched, and they figured we were too dumb to notice,” Ray said. “We're not that dumb.”

To Whom it May Concern:

About May of 1965 I arrived on assignment to Bermuda at Kindley AFB. My wife and four daughters arrived about June 1965. We rented a house in an area called Pembroke which is near the town of Hamilton. The neighbors next door to me were Ronald and Edna Slater. At the time Ron and Edna were living on the economy and did not have a car or income compared to mine while in the Air Force.

Ron got a job at Kindley AFB, driving heavy equipment at the land fill garbage dump on Base. Ron did not have a large wardrobe of clothes. When he worked at the land fill it was usually in a tee shirt and dungerees.

Ron did not have transportation to the Base. I know he rode the bus to the Base as it was his only means of transportation. I don't remember how it started, but eventually he was riding with me to the Base and back home with me in the evening.

The landfill at the Base dump was much smaller than what you would see back in the States. It had one large ravine. Trash, garbage, building materials, steel barrels, wood, metal roofing, siding from old barracks, insulation from hangers, and asbestos covering from pipes. All of this was dumped in that one ravine, and all was set on fire. Ron would run a bulldozer or tractor over all this rubbish and push it into the ocean. I used to pick Ron up at the dump after work, remembering one time there were a bunch of metal barrels in the ravine and Ron was driving over them with a bulldozer crushing them. The tracks on the bulldozer had some sort of liquid all over them. I asked Ron what the liquid was and he said it was Agent Orange. Ron told me he worked around Agent Orange when he was on active duty with the Navy in Puerto Rico

The dump also had a small furnace looking machine that was used to burn trash from the A.F. hospital. After it was burnt it was dumped into the ravine and bulldozed into the ocean. I remember Ron telling me about a patrol plane that crashed on Base, and after the investigation, what was left of the plane was cut up and thrown into the ravine at the dump. Ron also ran over it with the bulldozer and pushed it into the ocean.

For a long time, months, Ron did not have the right clothes for that Job. It doesn't get real cold in Bermuda, but the winters are damp and chilly.

After Ron got to know his way around the Base, he went to the Fire Department and saw some old uniforms. He asked about them and the firemen gave Ron the uniforms to wear so he finally had some kind of coveralls. Ron also had some type of headgear that the firemen gave him. I even remember giving him a couple of old shirts and a leather jacket that I wasn't wearing anymore.

It took Ron about 1-1/2 years to save enough money and buy a car, a black VW Bug.

It's been almost 40 years that I have known Ronald Slater. We haven't seen each other since Bermuda, but we have been in contact with each other by mail, phone and e-mail.

I hereby certify that the above statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

SMSgt. James A. Kustush USAF
Retired 1 June 1980 - 28 Years Active Duty
DAV-Life Member - Since May 1980
DAV-Chapter-Knob Hill #26
"C" No. 19 777 974
Colorado Springs, CO.

James A. Kustush

1 January 2004

FILE COPY

WISHA DISCRIMINATION INVESTIGATIONS
300 West Harrison Street
Seattle, WA 98119
(206) 281-5419

November 8th, 2000

Ronald A. SLATER
1531 Masterson Road
Cle Elum, WA. 98922
(Plaintiff)

Washington Group International, Inc.
3411 11th Avenue SW
Seattle, WA. 98134
(Respondent)

RE: SLATER v. WGI, Inc, # W-638049

Dear Plaintiff and Respondent,

The investigation into this matter has been completed. All submitted evidence and testimony have been carefully examined and considered.

My recommendation in this matter is for a finding of merit in favor of the Plaintiff, Ronald A. SLATER

Accordingly, both parties are requested to submit, within 20 days of receipt of this letter, a reasonable proposal for settlement of this matter.

Should the Respondent fail to submit such a proposal I will assume that the party is not interested in settlement and the case will be referred to the Office of Attorney General for formal litigation.

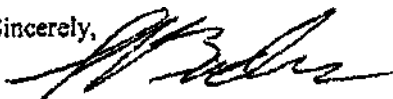
Should the Plaintiff fail to submit such a proposal, I will assume that the case has been abandoned and this Department will withdraw from all further attempts at settlement or litigation.

Please submit your proposals to me at the above address.

You may reach me at my cell phone, (206) 660-2916, should you have questions in this matter. If you are unable to reach me, please contact Donald BUTLER, Discrimination Investigations Manager, at (360) 902-5480 with your questions.

Your patience and consideration during this investigation are sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely,



Ted L. Bader, Investigator

NTSB Identification: SEA7LAS024
 14 CFR General Aviation Form
 Event occurred Sunday, November 01, 1970 in SEATTLE, WA
 Aircraft: MOONEY M20C, registration: CF-DBR

FILE	DATE	LOCATION	AIRCRAFT DATA	INJURIES F S M/N	FLIGHT PURPOSE	PILOT
3-3914	70/11/1 TIME - 1421	SEATTLE, WASH	MOONEY M20C CF-DBR DAMAGE-DESTROYED	CR- 1 0 0 FX- 3 0 0 OT- 0 0 2	NONCOMMERCIAL PLEASURE/PERSONAL TRANSP	CERTIFICATE 25, 238 TOTAL IN TYPE, NOT RATED.
NAME OF AIRPORT BOEING DEPARTURE POINT		INTENDED DESTINATION SEATTLE, WASH		PHASE OF OPERATION LANDING: TRAFFIC PATTERN-CIRCLING		
VANCOUVER, BC, CAN						
TYPE OF ACCIDENT		COLLISION WITH AIRCRAFT: BOTH IN FLIGHT				
PROBABLE CAUSE(S)		PILOT IN COMMAND - FAILED TO SEE AND AVOID OTHER AIRCRAFT				
FACTOR(S)		PILOT IN COMMAND - FAILED TO FOLLOW APPROVED PROCEDURES, DIRECTIVES, ETC.				
		MISCELLANEOUS ACTS, CONDITIONS - CONGESTED TRAFFIC-PATTERN				
		PERSONNEL - TRAFFIC CONTROL PERSONNEL: FAILURE TO ADVISE OF OTHER TRAFFIC				
		SPECIAL DATA				
		SEGMENTS OF AVIATION INVOLVED - SMALL OR GEN.AV. -FOREIGN GEN.AV.				
		CONTROLLING AGENCY - TOWER		RADAR CTL/SURVEILLANCE - UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED		
		TRAFFIC ADVISORY ISSUED - BY LOCAL CONTROL		CONTROLLED/UNCONTROLLED AIRPORT - CONTROLLED		
		CONTROL ZONE/AREA - YES		HORIZONTAL COLLISION ANGLE-DEGREES - 37		
		EVASIVE ACTION TAKEN - UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED		ANTI-COLLISION LIGHTS - INSTALLED, OPERATION		
REMARKS- CF-DBR OBS TO RAPIDLY OVERTAKE N92711 ON DOWNWIND LEG.R OUTER WG PANEL OF CF-DBR SEPARATED IN						

Index for Nov 1970 | Index of months

8/8/2005

AUG-08-2005 16:34

P.05/07

NTSB Identification: **SEA71AS024**
 14 CFR Part 91 General Aviation
 Event occurred Sunday, November 01, 1970 in SEATTLE, WA
 Aircraft: CESSNA 182N, registration: N92711

FILE	DATE	LOCATION	AIRCRAFT DATA	INJURIES	FLIGHT PURPOSE	PILOT
3-3914	70/11/1 TIME - 1421	SEATTLE, WASH	CESSNA 182N N92711	CR- 0 0 1 FX- 0 0 1 DAMAGE-SUBSTANTIAL OT- 4 0 0	NONCOMMERCIAL PLEASURE/PERSONAL TRANSP	PRIVATE, AGE TOTAL HOURS, MOT INSTRUME1
NAME OF AIRPORT - BOEING DEPARTURE POINT EASTBOUND, WASH TYPE OF ACCIDENT COLLISION WITH AIRCRAFT: BOTH IN FLIGHT PROBABLE CAUSE(S) PERSONNEL - MISCELLANEOUS-PERSONNEL: PILOT OF OTHER AIRCRAFT FACTOR(S) MISCELLANEOUS ACTS, CONDITIONS - CONGESTED TRAFFIC-PATTERN PERSONNEL - TRAFFIC CONTROL PERSONNEL: FAILURE TO ADVISE OF OTHER TRAFFIC SPECIAL DATA SEGMENTS OF AVIATION INVOLVED - SMALL US GEN.AV.-FOREIGN GEN.AV. CONTROLLING AGENCY - TOWER TRAFFIC ADVISORY ISSUED - NONE CONTROL ZONE/AREA - YES EVASIVE ACTION TAKEN - NO PHASE OF OPERATION LANDING: TRAFFIC PATTERN-CIRCLING REMARKS- CF-DBR NOT OBS BY TWR PERSONNEL UNTIL ACFT ABOUT MIDFIELD.N92711 HORIZ STAB SLASHED,INDD OK.						

Index for Nov 1970 | Index of months

8/8/2005

AUG-15-2005 13:11

P.02/03

NTSB Identification: SEA75AS022
 14 CFR Part 135 Nonscheduled operation of ALPINE HEUCOP
 Event occurred Monday, November 04, 1974 in KINGSTON, WA
 Aircraft: BELL 47G-2, registration: N5160B

FILE	DATE	LOCATION	AIRCRAFT DATA	INJURIES F S M/N	FLIGHT PURPOSE	PILOT
3-3836	74/11/4 TIME - 0830	KINGSTON, WA	BELL 47G-2 N5160B DAMAGE-DESTROYED	CR- 1 0 0 PX- 0 0 0 OT- 0 0 0	COMMERCIAL AIR TAXI-CAR30	COMMERCIAL, TOTAL HOURS, NOT INSTRUMENT
NAME OF AIRPORT		KINGSTON HELIPAD		LAST ENROUTE STOP		
DEPARTURE POINT		INTENDED DESTINATION		KINGSTON, WASH		
SEATTLE, WASH		SEQUIN, WASH		PHASE OF OPERATION		
TYPE OF ACCIDENT		COLLISION WITH GROUND/WATER: UNCONTROLLED		IN FLIGHT: UNCONTROLLED DESCENT		
PROBABLE CAUSE(S)						
PILOT IN COMMAND - INITIATED FLIGHT IN ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS						
PILOT IN COMMAND - SPATIAL DISORIENTATION						
FACTOR(S)						
PILOT IN COMMAND - INADEQUATE PREFLIGHT PREPARATION AND/OR PLANNING						
WEATHER - LOW CEILING						
WEATHER - FOG						
WEATHER BRIEFING - NO RECORD OF BRIEFING RECEIVED						
WEATHER FORECAST - UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED						
SKY CONDITION						
OVERCAST/LOWER SCATTERED						
VISIBILITY AT ACCIDENT SITE						
1 MILE OR LESS						
OBSTRUCTIONS TO VISION AT ACCIDENT SITE						
FOG						
TYPE OF FLIGHT PLAN						
NONE						
REMARKS- ACFT NOT EQUIPPED FOR INSTRUMENT FLT.						

Index for Nov 1974 | Index of months

8/15/2005

AUG-15-2005 13:12

P.03/03

NTSB Identification: ANC75AA069
 14 CFR Part 91 General Aviation
 Event occurred Sunday, March 23, 1975 in PETERSBURG, AK
 Aircraft: HUGHES 369HS, registration: N9139F

FILE	DATE	LOCATION	AIRCRAFT DATA	INJURIES F S M/N	FLIGHT PURPOSE	PILOT
3-3934	75/3/23 TIME - 1430	BA, PETERSBURG, AK	HUGHES 369HS N9139F DAMAGE-SUBSTANTIAL	CR- 1 0 0 FX- 2 1 0 OT- 0 0 0	NONCOMMERCIAL PLEASURE/PERSONAL TRANSP	PRIVATE, AGE TOTAL HOURS, TYPE, NOT IN: RATED.
		DEPARTURE POINT JUNEAU, AK	INTENDED DESTINATION KETCHIKAN, AK	LAST ENROUTE STOP COFFMAN COVE, AK	PHASE OF OPERATION IN FLIGHT: CLIMB TO CRUISE LANDING: POWER-OFF AUTO ROTATIVE LANDING	
		TYPE OF ACCIDENT ENGINE FAILURE OR MALFUNCTION COLLISION WITH GROUND/WATER: UNCONTROLLED PROBABLE CAUSE(S) POWERPLANT - MISCELLANEOUS: POWERPLANT FAILURE FOR UNDETERMINED REASONS PILOT IN COMMAND - FAILED TO MAINTAIN ADEQUATE ROTOR R.P.M. MISCELLANEOUS ACTS, CONDITIONS - IMPROPER EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FACTOR(S) PILOT IN COMMAND - LACK OF FAMILIARITY WITH AIRCRAFT WEATHER - SNOW MISCELLANEOUS ACTS, CONDITIONS - AIRCRAFT CAME TO REST IN WATER COMPUTE POWER LOSS - COMPLETE ENGINE FAILURE/FLAMEOUT-1 ENGINE WEATHER BRIEFING - UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED WEATHER FORECAST - UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED EMERGENCY CIRCUMSTANCES - FORCED LANDING OFF AIRPORT ON WATER SKY CONDITION OVERCAST VISIBILITY AT ACCIDENT SITE 2 MILES OR LESS OBSTRUCTIONS TO VISION AT ACCIDENT SITE UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED TYPE OF FLIGHT PLAN NONE REMARKS- REPTD THAT PLT HADNT MADE AUTOROTATION IN HELI FOR LAST 2 YRS.				
					CEILING AT ACCIDENT SITE UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED	
					PRECIPITATION AT ACCIDENT SITE SNOW	
					TYPE OF WEATHER CONDITIONS VFR	

Index for Mar 19975 | Index of months

8/15/2005

TOTAL P.03

AUG-16-2005 16:04

P.02/02

NTSB Identification: **LAX78FA031**
 14 CFR Part 135 Nonscheduled operation of SECURITY AIR T
 Event occurred Tuesday, February 28, 1978 in SOLVANG, CA
 Aircraft: AERO COMDR 500A, registration: N6143X

FILE	DATE	LOCATION	AIRCRAFT DATA	INJURIES			FLIGHT . PURPOSE	PILOT	
				F	S	NON			
3-1161	79/2/28	NR. SOLVANG, CA	AERO COMDR 500A	CR-	3	0	0	COMMERCIAL	COMMERCIAL,
	TIME - 1030		N6143X	PX-	4	0	0	AIR TAXI-PASSG	AGE 48. 1777
			INTENDED DESTINATION	OT-	0	0	0		HOURS, 2440
			SANTA BARBARA, CA						INSTRUMENT R.
		DEPARTURE POINT						LAST ENROUTE STOP	
		VISALIA, CA						SANTA MARIA, CA	
		TYPE OF						PHASE OF OPERATION	
		ACCIDENT						IN FLIGHT: DESCENDING	
		COLLISION WITH GROUND/WATER: CONTROLLED							
		PROBABLE CAUSE(S)							
		PILOT IN COMMAND - CONTINUED VFR FLIGHT INTO ADVERSE I							
		WEATHER CONDITIONS							
		FACTOR (S)							
		WEATHER - LOW CEILING							
		WEATHER BRIEFING - BRIEFED BY FLIGHT SERVICE PERSONNEL			BY	PHONE			
		WEATHER FORECAST - FORECAST SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT							
		SKY CONDITION						CEILING AT ACCIDENT SITE	
		OVERCAST/LOWER SCATTERED						1500	
		VISIBILITY AT ACCIDENT SITE						PRECIPITATION AT ACCIDENT SITE	
		UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED						UNKNOWN/NOT REPORTED	
		OBSTRUCTIONS TO VISION AT ACCIDENT SITE						TEMPERATURE-F	
		GROUND FOC						61	
		WIND DIRECTION-DEGREES						WIND VELOCITY-KNOTS	
		110						11	
		TYPE OF WEATHER CONDITIONS						TYPE OF FLIGHT PLAN	
		IFR						NONE	

Index for Feb 1978 | Index of months

8/15/2005

1 the "island-wide" unit, essentially comprises all parts of the Island not included in the other
 2 units. See Exh. 32, p.9, Figure 3.

3 Between May 1991 and February 1993, the EPA completed its remedial investigation
 4 for the island-wide unit. This included the performance of a feasibility study (FS). The RI/FS
 5 revealed a panoramic array of pollutants on, in, and under the island-wide unit:

6 <u>Surface soil (0-6 inches)</u> 7 8 9 10 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • petroleum products – concentrations up to 51,000 mg/kg • PAHs – concentrations up to 50 mg/kg • PCBs – concentrations up to 420 mg/kg • lead, "found over most of the island," – concentrations up to 401,000 mg/kg; 55% of surface soil and 12% of subsurface soil exceeding 1,000 mg/kg • arsenic – concentrations up to 1,830 mg/kg • cadmium – concentrations up to 131 mg/kg • chromium – concentrations up to 791 mg/kg
12 <u>Subsurface soil (below six inches)</u> 13 14 15 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • same organic and inorganic compounds as surface soil; concentration generally decreasing with depth • petroleum products – concentrations up to 90,517 mg/kg • PAHs – concentrations up to 182 mg/kg • PCBs – concentrations up to 5.48 mg/kg • lead – concentrations up to 32,200 mg/kg • mercury (not found in surface soil) – concentrations up to 8.1 mg/kg
17 <u>Groundwater</u> 18 19 20 21 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • petroleum products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > benzene – up to 3,900 micrograms/liter > ethylbenzene – up to 1,800 micrograms/liter > O-xylene – up to 16,000 micrograms/liter > vinyl chloride – up to 7 micrograms/liter • mercury – up to 3 micrograms/liter • cadmium – up to 21 micrograms/liter • lead – up to 64 micrograms/liter • zinc – up to 1,700 micrograms/liter • ammonia – "elevated levels"

DEPARTMENT'S CORRECTED
 PETITION FOR REVIEW

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF WASHINGTON
 Labor & Industries Division
 PO Box 40121
 Olympia, WA 98504-0121
 (360) 459-6563
 FAX: (360) 438-7485

FROM: US EPA
1200 Sixth Avenue, ECL-113
Seattle, WA 98101

SUBJECT: Seattle Superfund Site

TO: Mr. Ronald Slater
E-mail:

March 16, 2005

Dear Mr. Slater:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has received your email dated February 24, 2005 with the document, "Montana '59 to Superfund '99." Your actions as an informant speaking out about the worker conditions and contractor disregard of health and safety issues brought about changes in the EPA oversight of the cleanup contractor's health and safety policies. These health and safety conditions existed during the Port of Seattle's T-18 Redevelopment Projects in 2000 at the Harbor Island Superfund site. The information EPA investigators obtained about worker health and safety concerns were turned over to the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). This resulted in findings against the prime cleanup contractor, Morrison-Knudson.

EPA had an agent of its Criminal Investigations Division evaluate the evidence of unlawful contaminated discharges to the Duwamish River and Elliott Bay. You were able to provide important information to his investigation which was later added to the state L&I complaints. You were made aware at the time that there was insufficient available data for EPA to pursue criminal proceeding against Morrison-Knudson.

EPA took your information about improper cleanup work at the Harbor Island Superfund site seriously. All of the reviews of plans, specifications, and health and safety plans do not protect workers or the environment if they are not implemented. It was because of your contact with EPA that we alerted the project owner and got the proper cleanup procedures implemented. It is regrettable that you feel that you were exposed to contaminated soils without implementation of the approved worker and environmental protection plans.

If you have any questions or further concerns about the Harbor Island Superfund site, please contact me or the EPA, Region 10, Project Manager, Neil Thompson, at 206-553-7177.

Sincerely,

Daniel D Opalski, Director
Office of Environmental Cleanup

My Gratitude and heart felt appreciation to Rich Neumann, of Stone in the Surf for his guidance, perfection, and unselfish direction in getting this book published.



"Welcome to Stone In The Surf Press, a passionately Independent Publisher. My goal is to provide a portal for sharing my books, stories and experiences. I also hope to help other people who share the same passion and dream of writing and self-publishing. Becoming an indie publisher is more than self-publishing; it's more than vanity press or being part of a giant POD conglomerate. It is a commitment to yourself to publish and share your work independent of the opinions, criticisms and negativity of the rest of the world. In this website I have pulled together many of my successes and failures at trying to turn my dream into a reality. And, a checklist of the essential things you will need to become a successful indie as well.

"You will also find my works that have made it into print, those that are coming soon and lots of works in progress. Feel free to ask questions."

Richard Neumann, on his website, www.stoneinthesurf.com.

Also my gratitude, thanks, and great pleasant surprise, in finding a true professional and artist of Graphic Web Design in Jared A Watkins of Watkins Graphic & Web Design in Cle Elum Washington.

Watkins Graphic & Web Design is prepared to provide graphics services to just about any type of business need. From simple text-based websites, to graphical ecommerce websites, to advanced flash websites, we will make your presence known on the Internet. We also offer custom graphics services in the area of POP (point of promotion) posters for small businesses.

Feel free to contact me with any questions regarding my services.

Watkins Graphic & Web Design
www.watkinsgraphicdesign.com
(509) 590-2341 - Office

