



SHANE WOODS SERIES
BOOK ONE
THE SNOW PEAK ROBBERS

INTRODUCTION

I have often been told that I am a great story teller. I tried to demonstrate that in these 11 books I have written. Many of the stories I tell happened to me, or to others I have known; some I heard tell happened. I have tried to have fun and be serious about my faith at the same time. If I have made you laugh or cry, then my goal is achieved.

My goal is to present Christ as the only true Savior and to expound the fact that only 100% devotion to Him is reasonable, true Christian behavior. Anything less is not acceptable. He made this very clear. I would also like to put a BIG slam-dunk on the liquor industry. It is a legal drug that destroyed my family, sent my mother to prison, was the reason my brother, Danny, died at 49 years old and was the reason my cousin killed himself.

The first three chapters happened to me, except the visit from the guardian angel. There will be a visit from him in every book as the Bible says, "THEY ARE MINISTERS TO THE SAINTS." I also did not have a sister with me when I went to jail in Medford, Oregon. I was alone.

I was abandoned four times by my mother and each time I ended up at the farm on Crabtree Creek. My roots run deep there and it was the only refuge I ever had. I owe a great deal to my Grandfather John Taylor and his wonderful wife, Julia, who owed me nothing but loved me and sacrificed a great deal for me. I have no idea where I would be today if it weren't for their tender care of me, certainly not where I am.

My prayer is that these books will inspire you to accept Christ as your Savior and to live whole heartedly for Him. He deserves your utmost. I accepted Christ on May 6, 1964 after another sailor, Richard Edwards, invited me to attend the Calvary Baptist Church of San Francisco, California. I spent one more

year in the Navy, preaching aboard the ship while we were at sea, with Richard helping me.

I spent ten years studying the Bible formally. Our family arrived in Brazil on Oct 1, 1976. We have started four churches and I am presently still pastoring the fourth one and coaching wrestling in a public school.

There are a lot of funny names in the books, usually only the bad guys and smart alecks get them. They are in **RED** so you won't miss their significance.

I dedicate this first book to my lovely wife, Penny Sue Stimpson Latham, who has been my soul mate for 48 years and my missionary church planting companion for 43 years. I love her with my whole soul. She is the delight of my life and the joy of our three children, six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Dr. Tom Latham
missionary/wrestling coach in Brazil

CHAPTER ONE

ABANDONED

Loretta Woods made a feeble, shaking attempt to get her key into the door of the dark blue, rusted-out 1951 Chevy convertible, which she bought with money from Shane and Thomas; and still owed \$150.00. She had told the kids she was going downtown to try and win some money playing poker at the local bar in Hopland, California. This was her nightly practice; leaving the kids to fend for themselves while she was feeding her drinking habit, always excusing her inexcusable conduct by blaming her horrible life style choices on bad luck and other people's incomprehensible mistakes.

She knew deep down in her young mother's heart that this was not acceptable but her addiction was over ruling her parental instincts and her common sense. There had been times when she desperately wanted to free her lonely soul from the grips of alcohol but its hold on her was like the evil twists of a hungry python, strangling the life out of her and her wonderful children, whom she claimed to love with great devotion, but had no living proof of this love.

It was not GOOD LUCK she had, that could be proven. Loretta was only a tender hearted nine year old, living on the farm in Lacombe, Oregon when her mother abandoned the family for a more lively and free life style, leaving her hard-working husband to raise three children on a lumberjack's meagre salary.

After that heart-wrenching ordeal, Loretta had to work hard every year in the local crop harvests just to buy worn-out clothes at Polly Potters Used Clothing Trailer. This was no place for a young lady to buy a dress to attend school. She was embarrassed by her wardrobe and teased relentlessly because she had no mother at home.

All this instability took Loretta down a tumbling, dark road that led her to be the unhappy mother of two boys and girl, whom all had different fathers; which is why she insisted that they keep her maiden name - Woods. Her life was like a tumble weed, weak and driven by the unplanned winds of the prairie, taking her where she really knew deep in the recesses of her soul that she should not go.

During her last years at Lebanon Union High School, she found a soul mate in another girl who had some similar family problems that drove her to the brink. But, Gloria found a way to survive. She linked up with a people-friendly group at the Lacombe Baptist Church.

Week after week, Gloria tried to get Loretta to consider God as a heavenly Father that actually cared for his children. These attempts fell on hardened, deaf ears.

Gloria was insistent, “Listen, girl! You are going down a path that leads to valleys of despair and mountains of temptations that you are not going to be able to see your way through. There are only tragic days ahead for you if you continue down this horrible road.” Gloria was talking from experience as she had already been down those **dead end streets**. She had found her way back to sanity by looking to Christ for salvation and His church for support.

Loretta thought she was being preached to and she resented it with all her being. “Don’t come at me with that religion stuff. If God really exists and cares one lick for me, I would not have been abandoned by my mother in the first place. Can you refute this?” She was proud of her logic and stubborn



to boot, she had unattended calluses from so many religious hypocrites trying to tell her how to live her life.

Gloria never gave up on her teenage friend and promised to pray for her. “I don’t have all these answers you are seeking. Hey, I don’t even know all the right questions to ask. I do know what the Bible says and I know what Jesus taught and it is enough for me to follow Him and trust Him when I do not understand what is going on.” She moved closer and put her hand on Loretta’s shoulder. God loves you, this I know. Jesus died for you, this I know. He wants to be your Savior, this I know and He wants to give you the abundant life, all this I can prove.”

Loretta pulled away and smirked, “Yeah, right, and watermelons grow on trees too.” What did Gloria know about her inner feelings anyway, was she abandoned, was she lonely, was she? Did she have to wake up every morning and fix breakfast for three hungry men, this was a mother’s job and she never did want to be this mother. If there was a God, and she saw no proof that there was, He was either on vacation, cruel or disconnected, whatever; He certainly was not interested in an abandoned little girl’s lonely slice of life.

This was their last conversation, the one where Gloria promised to pray for her. “I don’t need your prayers, what I need is a job and a handsome rich boyfriend.”

In the years following high school, the jobs were hit and miss and but the boyfriends were never hard to find. They swarmed around this blond beauty like happy **bees to a honey**



hive. Loretta loved the attention and it proved to be her **kryptonite.** Three bad congenial relationships in just ten suffering years produced Thomas, Shane and Kosette, three children that



were not responsible for their fate nor the consequences of their mom's bad choices.

Now they were all home watching TV while their frightened, tipsy mother was trying to get her keys into the car door before the men chasing her discovered where her vehicle was parked. And why were they chasing her? For weeks, she had been gambling on borrowed money, with the promise of paying it back to the loan sharks from her winnings. The only problem was, she had no poker face and thus the chips were not falling generously on her side of the table.

The uncooperative keys fell on the ground. She started breathing heavily as she searched frantically for the leather key ring. There she found it, with her heart in her throat she fearfully muttered, "Now let's get out of here before I am toast." Fortunately for her, the keys slid into the lock, it opened and she was revving the motor, ramming it into first and throwing rocks all over the three men yelling and chasing her, shaking their fists at the sky.

"That Loretta is in real trouble now. Do any of you know where she lives?" They were breathing hard, not used to running after get-away Chevys tossing dirt and rocks into their beady little eyes.

The 51' Chevy's small bored motor was screaming as she plowed into traffic, not caring how many motorists she ticked off. At least for now, she was one step ahead of the dangerous people she owed money to. She was only a bit concerned because she was certain they did not know where she lived. Her hardened heart raced rapidly as she weaved around other unsuspecting drivers. After her bad luck and narrow escape, she had to get home and reconsider her future.

The Woods kids all noticed their mother a bit unraveled when she stomped noisily into the living room. Her first nightly attempt at being somewhat of a mother was a gruff order, barked into their tender ears, as usual. "Shut that boob tube off and get to bed, tomorrow is a school day." At times she felt a little guilty at the way she was neglecting these three charges of her's but they have it a lot better than she had, at least they HAD a mom to bark at them and to make breakfast for them, even if it was just stale cereal sometimes with no milk, just water!

The three startled siblings knew when it was time to react quickly. Thomas jumped up and turned off the TV, taking calmly to Shane and Kosy, "Let's not irritate Mom, she seems a bit tipsy and now is a time to avoid any confrontation with her." He was the only anchor Shane and Kosy had for their miserable existence. He was the rock they stood on when their mom was tipsy or totally out of

it. He grabbed Kosy by the hand, "Let's move now, little sister, before mom gets the wooden ladle." He knew by experience what that would feel like.



Thomas was finished with high school and had already joined the Navy, just waiting for orders to come any day and he was off to a mighty adventure. He wanted to be a **Navy Seal** and thought he could do it, too.

He could be the three in one hundred that made it. He did not want to leave his siblings but they both assured him that they would be okay, he needed to get on with his life. They would follow his example as soon as they were able to break away from this nightmare of an existence.

Thomas had been intensely interested in the military every since he heard that his Grandfather Jack Woods had served on the **USS Arizona**, getting off 21 years before it sunk at Pearl Harbor. The oldest Woods kid was always trying to find Soldier of Fortune magazines, and some times even slipped them under his jacket as he walked unsuspectedly out of a store.



Shane was the fun loving part of the trio. Always joking and messing around. Practical jokes were his forte and a winning smile his best asset. He was good at sports and loved baseball with

a passion. He was just about to graduate from grammar school and was looking forward to trying out for a high school baseball team.

Loretta treated all three of them with the same unmotherly distain, like **they were just speed bumps**, slowing her down in the high speed life style she really wanted to live. She took special aim at Shane's carefree attitude. She would see him enjoying life

and would blurt out, “What are you smiling about? Who gave you permission to be so happy?”

He was the joy of his siblings unhappy childhood. He was the “peanut butter and jelly” on their stale piece of bread. Shane wanted only to get out of this place but he felt a deep love and



daily concern for his wonderful, tender hearted sister. He would never leave her to fend for herself against a mom that demonstrated every day that she did not deserve to be a mother and really did not want to be either.

Kosette was the timid soul of the group, she was always biting her nails in all nervous situations, including the wide-eyed episodes caused by her mother’s drinking sprees. She was the one who suffered the most when the three of them were left in boarding homes as Loretta wandered aimlessly from county to county, avoiding the loan sharks and stumbling into the house half crooked.

She was the one with the most questions, always wondering why they had to live like this. Her heart hurt most of the time and she spent a lot of nights crying herself to sleep. Thomas tried to comfort her, telling her bedtime stories and assuring her that some day all this would be over, at least that is what he hoped.

Kosy wanted to know why? Her eleven-year old mind was pounded with unanswered questions. When all of their classmates were having family picnics and going on vacations, the Woods kids were packing again and moving again, never knowing that it was their mother’s only hope of avoiding the

trouble stalking her like blood hounds after a skinny, scared fox. This horrible life style took its unfortunate toll on her young, tender heart.

Years of abandonment from her own mother only taught Loretta what life should not be like. Even though her dad, Jack, was about as good as a dad any man could be, he could not fill the gap left in a young girl's life that only a loving mother could. A mother that would understand the changes of life and the desires of a young maiden's heart.

There is NO substitute on earth for a mother's loving care. Loretta was denied this and did not seem to realize she was doing the same thing to her children, especially her lovely daughter. She always thought they were better off than she ever was, but she was woefully wrong, and it was the kids that were learning this painful lesson.

Now she was concerned for her safety. What if the men from last night found out where she lived. Then all four of them would be in danger. Her heart beat faster just thinking of someone physically hurting her children. She did not want to be a mother, but she did not lack the "milk of human kindness" which would provide her with enough compassion to desire the safety of ANY child, including her own.

The next morning, after she sent the kids off to school, she started to wash up the dishes when the phone ran. Her heart skipped a beat, wondering if this was going to be a dangerous conversation. With a trembling hand she picked up the receiver, "Hello!" she squeaked out with fear in her voice. "Loretta, this is Gloria." Gloria, what in the world was her best friend in high school calling her for after all these years of silence? She was dumbfounded and silent for too long.

"Loretta, are you there? For pete's sake, answer me, girl! Are you there?" Gloria was not about to hang up. She was

desperate and knew Loretta was on the other side of the line. “I think I have some information you NEED to know, right now.”

There was urgency and fear in her voice that Loretta never heard before and it was frightened her. She answered with her heart in her throat, “Gloria, what in the world are you calling me for after all these years? What is the problem?” She was not sure she even wanted to know.

Gloria took a deep sigh and started, “I think I have done something dreadfully wrong. Someone just called me, saying they were from our high school alumni association and was trying to get a hold of all our classmates for the upcoming 20th class reunion. They wanted to know if I knew where you were. I am afraid I did not realize what I was doing until just before they hung up. I told them where you lived and the caller thanked me. Just before he hung up, I could hear someone in the back ground saying, ‘Now we’ve got her, let’s go guys.’ What is going on, girl. Are you in trouble?”

Loretta got goose bumps, the hair on the back of her neck stood up. She rapidly blurted out, “Got to girl, I will call you later.” With that, she dropped the receiver and ran for her bedroom, grabbing some clothes and a few packs of smokes. She figured if she hightailed it out of there, the thugs would arrive afterwards, not finding her and leave before the kids got home from school. She thought this was the best way to protect her kids.

Scared people many times do not make the right decisions and this was one of these times. Her hand trembled so she was hardly able to scribble a message to the kids. When she finished, she threw it in the freezer along with the car keys. She tossed her meager items in a backpack and headed down the road not even knowing where she was going but in a definite hurry to get there.

She was right about one thing, the bad guys did get there within a few minutes after she left. They found the house empty. Wanting to leave a message no one would have a hard time understanding, they took all of her dresses out of the closet and ripped them to shreds, throwing them on the bed. The apparent boss spoke gruffly, “Okay, that is enough to give her the message, lets blow out of here.” With that they abandoned the house with the clear and dreadful message left behind.

When the kids came home from school the first place they always went to was the mail box, anxiously looking for Thomas’ orders to report to duty at the Naval Training Center in San Diego, California. Kosy beat them to the box, and leaped for joy to see a return address from the Department of the Navy. She ran to Thomas waving the letter, “It came big brother, here it is. How wonderful for you. I am so happy for you.” She loved Thomas with all her heart and never was afraid to say it or show it.

Shane grabbed the letter before Thomas had caught up. “You had better be faster than that, bro, if you want to be a Navy Seal.” With that, Shane ripped open the letter just as Thomas was lunging for him.

Winded but determined, Thomas jumped Shane, knocking him to the grass and tore the letter out of his grubby little fingers. “Alright, Shane enough of your tomfoolery. This has to be it.” Thomas read the letter with great exultation, “Wow, it is sure enough, I have to report in tomorrow. TOMORROW! Yikes, we have to hurry up and tell Mom, she will want to know asap.”

With that good news on hand, the three bursted into the house, calling out for their mom. Since she was no where to be found they looked in the bedroom. Their eyes went wide open when they saw all of Loretta’s dresser drawers thrown helter skelter over the whole room. Thomas was the first to notice and his heart started beating so fast he thought he was going to pass

out. “What is this, all of mom’s dresses are cut to shreds and strewn over the bed.” This was very disconcerting for all of them.

Shane gasped as he blurted out, “Thomas, look!” When Kosy and Thomas turned to stare at what Shane was pointing to, they both took deep breaths and squealed.



Kosy was first, “Thomas what is that huge **Bowie knife** doing stabbed into the dresser top?” Her innocent demeanor was gone, she was bug eyed and terrified from the obvious message left behind.

Thomas was in charge and took his duty seriously. “We have to get out of here. Something is dreadfully wrong. Mom is in real trouble this time and these guys are not kidding. They left us a clear message.” Thomas knew that sometimes mom would leave messages for them in the freezer, why he never figured out. But that is where he headed for. Sure enough there was a note in it.

Out of breath from anxiety he read the note out loud. “I know I have not been a good mother, but now is not the time to debate this. You are safer without me. Take the car and go to Grandpa’s farm. I will contact you later. SORRY, love you, Mom.

Thomas was moved to action. He grabbed the car keys and stuffed the note in Shane’s pocket, along with the \$20.00 attached to it. “Get your stuff together, NOW. We are in a hurry, and I mean it.”

With only a few items anyway, it took just a few minutes for them to get packed. Shane went back into Loretta’s bedroom and grabbed the Bowie knife. Kosy was so scared she was

trembling, “Where is Mom, what is happening to her? Will we ever see her again?” Although Loretta was not a good mother she was still the only one they would ever have and they knew it. They were all deeply concerned for her.

Thomas threw their belongings into the Chevy and drove Shane and Kosy to the outskirts of town, giving Shane one more driving lesson on the way. “It is up and forward for second and down and forward for third gear, got it?” Shane, still dazed, shook his head up and down.

“I cannot go with you, if I don’t arrive tomorrow afternoon they will put me on report. So, you have to drive up Highway 99 until you get to Albany and then keep following the signs for Lacombe. Do you think you can do this? You are in charge now.”

Shane looked flabbergasted, “What, I am in charge! I don’t want to be in charge. I am not old enough or tall enough to be in charge.”

“We don’t have a choice. Those guys were not kidding around. If they find us here, they will use us to get to mom. I will stay with a friend tonight and report to San Diego tomorrow. Shane, Kosy is your responsibility now. Take good care of her.”

Kosette was in tears, she did not want to spilt up, they were all she had now. Her heart broke and her words came stumbling out, “Thomas, do, do you have to go, I don’t want you to go. You are my big brother. I love you.”

This was breaking Thomas’ heart but it would not change things, they had to move quickly, before the thugs returned. As he hugged his little sister he tried not to show his tears, he wanted to appear more brave than that. “Little sister (he always called her that) I cannot go with you but Shane will take care of you and I will catch up with you later.”

With that he kissed her and let her go. He turned to Shane and gave him a big bear hug and then pushed him behind the wheel. “I hope you can remember all the driving lessons I gave

you. Now get going before it is too late. You can probably make it to the Oregon border by midnight. Stop and buy something to eat soon.”

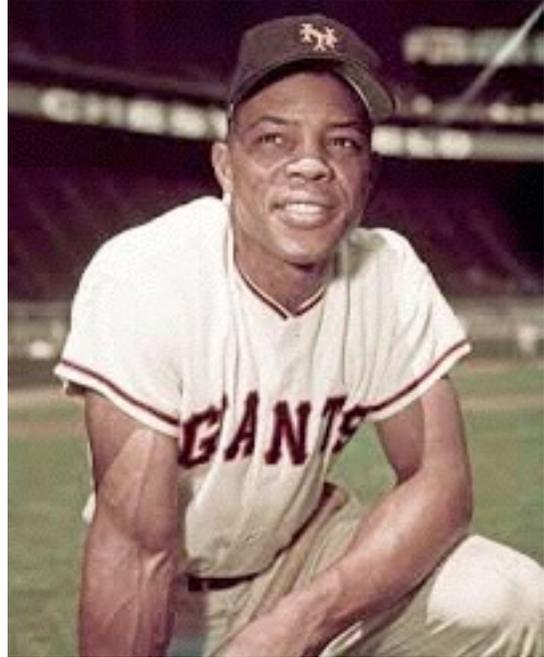
With that, Shane pulled out and turned the corner. Thomas would insist that he was not crying but his tears would not agree with him. Not having been raised in church, he was definitely not a religious person but he did manage to look up and whisper, “God help us, I heard something about guardian angels, PLEASE send one to protect these my loved ones. I will be forever grateful.”



THIS IS THE CAR I DROVE TO GRANDPA'S FARM IN MAY OF 1961. I PAID \$275.00 FOR IT USED, OF COURSE! IT IS ONE OF THE GREAT CLASSIC CARS OF ALL TIMES.

CHAPTER TWO HEADING NORTH

The sun was just peeking over Mount Shasta as the blue convertible wound its way through the narrow twisting highway. The 1951 Chevrolet had traveled through the night. To keep himself amused, Shane had listened to Juan Marichal beat the Dodgers 3-1. To make it even better, **Willie Mays** had hit his tenth homer.



The old, worn out tube radio started picking up more static than good music. With the coming of dawn, the aggravating noise kept shifting from one fading station to another. Disgusted with the noise, Shane shut it off, noticing that his headlights were much brighter.

The "Bluejay", as they had nicknamed the car, wouldn't mean much to most people. But, it was what Shane hung on to for some continuity as he traveled from California to Oregon. Loretta had left the keys in the freezer and told them to hit the road to Grandpa Woods farm in Lacombe, Oregon. She had not calculated that Thomas would not be traveling with them and that the \$20 she left



was not enough to get them there. Thomas left Shane in charge!

He did not want to be in charge. For pete's sake, he was only 15 and did not feel he was qualified to take care of his little sister, but there was no other choice. If they stayed in Hopland, without a parent, the county would find out and take them into custody and separate them from each other, putting them in the foster system. **THAT WAS NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN.**

The gas gauge needle bounced between empty and totally empty. "I've got to find a gas station," Shane thought to himself. "But I don't want to wake up little sister. She has been sleeping soundly for only a few hours, and she sure needs the rest."

Kosy would have slept soundly through the night, if she hadn't been frightened by the warning signs along the road. "Look, Shane, **there are jumping deer in this area,**" she warned in a worried tone, as she started biting her fingernails again.

Instead of resting in the back seat on top of their clothes pile, she had ridden "shotgun" most of the night. She felt compelled to warn her brother of





roadside hazards, real or imagined.

Kosy had counted twelve does, three bucks, a few porcupines, and of course, one striped kitty. Shane avoided the pole cat like the plague, and almost went in the ditch doing so.

Kosy yelled at her driver, "Wow, you almost hit that stunk."

"It's a skunk, not a stunk," Shane corrected her. "But we would have stunk if we'd hit it." Shane was trying to humor his sister. He knew she could use a little humor considering what they had been through.

There were some things about life Shane found easy to understand. It wasn't hard to comprehend math or history, or to figure out how to hit a curve ball. What baffled his mind was how people could claim they loved you and then treat you like you did not exist.

It was a question he could not answer, nor had he found anyone who could. "How could Mom treat us like she does? How could she always put herself first? Why did she even bring us into this world if she didn't care enough for us to stay around and be around when we needed her? Now she was gone and they had no idea where she was or when they would see her again. It deeply troubled him and it was impossible to explain to Kosy.

There had been many lonely nights in boarding homes when

Loretta Woods was out on one of her drinking sprees. Thomas was the oldest and was often the one responsible for keeping Kosy calm. Their mother never did seem to be moved by Kosy's tearful pleas. “Why can’t you stay home with us like most moms do? Why can’t we have a normal family? WHY?”

No one was able to explain why the Woods kids had to be bounced from pillar to post. Shane had attended thirteen grammar schools in just eight years of trying to learn to read. It was a wonder that the kids learned anything at all. The teachers were frustrated, having these children for only a few months at a time.

Shane was only fifteen but had lived in over twenty locations. That did not even allow enough time to make friends before he had to pack up and move on. Some of their secret moves were made during the dead of night. It seemed like their mother was chasing uncatchable dreams and leaving broken promises in her wake.

Shane felt guilty about sneaking out without paying the rent, but there was nothing he could do about it. They were NOT responsible for their mom’s mistakes, not in the least.

Since they were juniors, Thomas and Shane had worked wherever they could to make some kind of money to keep clothes on the three of them. The welfare checks were not enough to buy food, clothes and liquor. It seemed that the liquor took top priority. Shane had had all night to ponder these unanswerable questions. He was getting tired but felt he had to push on. His teenage heart ached for his little sister. She was so innocent and tender of soul.

It was beyond cruel what was happening to them.

It was now creeping up on 5:00 AM, and the gas gauge kept right on reminding him of a poor planner's nightmare. "I'll have to find something soon. We can't leave the car, nor can I leave Kosy in the car as I walk to get gas. There were too many things that could go wrong." Enough had gone wrong already, he didn't need to add to their misery.



"We have two hundred sixty miles to go, and only ten dollars left," he figured as he rounded a bend on old highway 99 and pulled into Weed, California. The name seemed appropriate considering all the sage brush he noticed. It reminded him of **"Tumbling Tumble Weeds"** a country western song that seemed to depict his very, uncertain existence; being wind-driven with no particular location in mind, at the mercy of nature which could be cruel at times.

They had passed through the forest of giant redwoods all during the night, that was beautiful, this brush was annoying. He wondered how Thomas was doing, if he was resting at all. He could imagine him up all night anxious to get started on his goal to

be a Navy Seal.

It had been at least two hundred miles since he had purchased gas. Something had better show up soon, or he would be hoofing it for petrol. When he approached the center of Weed, an all night Sinclair station welcomed him.

As he pulled up to the pump, an old man sauntered out. "What can I do for ya, Sonny? You must have been traveling all night by the looks of ya. Did you see any deer when you come through dem redwoods?"

"Why does everyone call me Sonny," Shane thought as he took off the gas cap. "My sister counted some and we almost hit a few. Give me five bucks worth, old timer, while I wash the bugs off the windows."

"Say, Sonny, you look a little young to be driving all by yerself," the old man wrinkled up his nose as he peeked suspiciously through his horned-rimmed glasses. "What are you kids doing - running away from home, or something?" The elderly inquisitor was about to take notes on Shane's situation.

"Listen, Gramps," Shane responded roughly, "Its none of your business. But if you are really concerned, no, we didn't run away from home. Home ran away from us. Just give me the gas and we'll be on our way. Here is the five bucks in case you're worried." Shane slapped the five spot into the outreached, leathery hand.

"Okay, Okay, Sonny, you can keep your secrets and be on ya

way, but dose police in Medford are a tough bunch. Keep ya eyes open, and sit on a pillow to make yerself higher in da saddle. Why, ya can barely see over da steering wheel."

Shane knew he did not have enough money to make it to Grandpa's farm. This was his number one concern. Avoiding the police had been a second concern of Shane's. He drove all night with his low beams on as his right high beam was burned out. "No sense in calling attention to myself," he had thought, as he strained to search the road for Kosy's jumping deer.

Now with the tank half full, or half empty, depending on whether he was an optimist or pessimist, Shane roared out of the gas station and hit the road again, dreading the next two hundred sixty miles.

There was only one of Shane's old fashioned donuts left, but **Kosy had six powdered donuts.** "I'll just eat one of hers. She'll never know the difference," Shane snickered to himself. He reached for the donut, only to be yelled at from the back.

"You're not stealing one of my powdered donuts are you, Big Brother," Kosy asked as she rubbed the sleep from her eyes. "You ate all of yours already, so stay out of mine. We won't get



any more food till we get to Grandpa's farm, will we?" She was leaping over the front seat so she could be closer to Shane, she felt safer that way.

"That's right."

"Oh, go ahead, have one. You must be hungry, having driven all night," she conceded her point and her donut. "Where are we anyway?"

"Well, as far as I can reckon we are about to cross the Oregon border. Medford is the next big city. From there it is only two hundred miles to Lacombe. Are you hungry?"

Kosy rubbed her stomach like she was starved but did not want to alarm Shane. "No, just thirsty. Is there any cow juice left in the carton?" Shane handed her the milk.

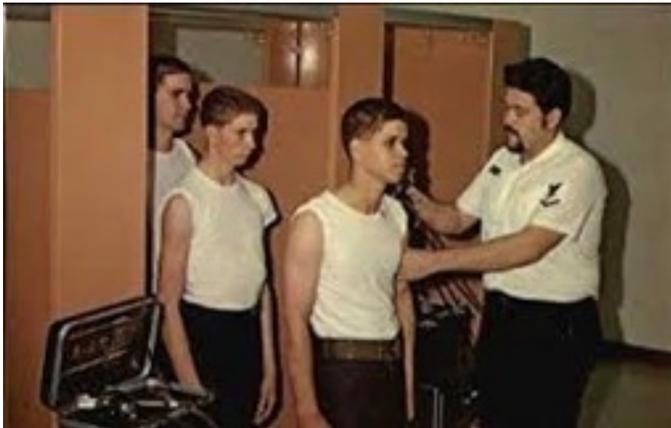
Kosy grabbed the carton. Before she washed down her last powered donut, she complained about the milk being lukewarm. "I hate lukewarm milk!" She stared out the window and noticed the sharp drop from the road to the river bed below. "Good grief Shane, be careful, we don't want to be floating down that river."

Kosy was only eleven years old but had already been hardened by her mother's callous life style. At times she would cry bitterly and then she would get so tough it scared the boys. Right now she was not hard. Tears began to well up in her young eyes and she hung her head.

"Shane, I don't think I can go on! What did we do wrong that made Mom hate us so? She has never treated us like she loved

us. What are we going to do? Where are we going to live? Will we ever see Mom again?"

Shane's eyes began to cloud up. He could not cry now, he had to drive. He was not tearful for his own sake, nor for his mother's. He was touched by Kosy's complaints. He certainly did not have the answers she wanted. When they came home and discovered that their mother had abandoned them, they loaded everything they owned and did the only thing he could think of. Thomas pushed them out the door and told them to head for Grandpa Woods's farm in central Oregon.



Maybe Grandpa would take them in again, as he had already done several times. He knew it would be a hardship on his poor grandparents, but that was the only thing that came to mind. Since Thomas was now on his way to the **Naval training center in San Diego**, it was up to Shane to console

Kosy.

Shane put his right hand on Kosy's shoulder, leaving his left hand to steer the car. His words would be sincere, but he was not sure if they would calm Kosy as Thomas always had. "I'm not sure why Mom left us, Kosy. I can't even begin to answer my own hard questions, let alone yours." Shane knew he had not helped her a bit.

Kosy acknowledged Shane's kindness with a weak smile. "I remember hearing some preacher say that God loves us, but I have not seen any reason to believe that. Do you believe God loves us, Shane?"

Shane stroked his chin in contemplation before he answered his little sister. "Good grief, Kosy," Shane blurted out. "I am no preacher and I don't know any more about God than you do. I am just trying to get us someplace where we can sleep and eat. You'll have to ask some preacher those questions."

The road straightened out between Ashland and Medford and Shane was relieved that the mountain curves had receded behind him. The weather had been clear all night. Now the clouds were stacking up on the Three Sisters Mountains, promising rain if the temperature didn't change. He remembered that southern Oregon has a lot of rain, especially during May. Then like nothing he had ever seen change so fast, it started to rain heavily, a real gully washer.

Shane had noticed the change of license plates from the



black with yellow letters of California to the blue with yellow letters of Oregon. It was the "Golden State" behind them and the "Pacific Wonderland" in front. Although he had no idea what the future would hold, he knew he was heading in the right direction - Grandpa's farm, the only refuge they had ever known.

Shane slapped his sister on the shoulder. "Well, Sis, what do you think about our move to Oregon?"

Kosy put her hands on her cheeks and looked down. "I suppose I should be used to moving again. We have only stayed in one place long enough for Mom to lose a good job. Shane, why do we live like this? I know a lot of kids that have good homes and kind parents. Why do we have to keep being mistreated and now abandoned?"

Before he could answer his sister, Shane's mind rapidly dug up the past

**1962 MAYBERRY
STYLE SQUAD CAR**



years. There had been lots of hunger and loneliness. It was particularly difficult when they both came at the same time. He thought he loved his mother, but he couldn't be sure. He didn't even know if he knew what love was, or could ever love anyone. Yet he knew he deeply love his dear sister Kosy. And Thomas was an older brother anyone one would be proud to have.

Loretta had a serious drinking problem. She had always been unwilling to face up to it and get help. She had already lived a life of a hypocrite and all three kids knew it. Shane thought of the most vivid example. It happened when he was only seven and Kosy just one. Thomas and he had broken into a storage shed and carried several items home. When Loretta found out she was furious. She made them take everything back except the fur-lined, black leather gloves. They fit so well, she just couldn't part with them!

The rain was still battering them, it was a concern of Shane's because of the old, black vinyl convertible roof. Suddenly, Shane noticed a man waving violently on the side of the road, he had actually walked to the center, making it impossible for Shane to move forward so he stopped and rolled down the window. Through the pelting rain the man yelled, "You can not go forward, the bridge is out, you will have to turn back."

Shane was startled, then he came to his senses and insisted the man get in the car, out of the punishing rain; and he did. "Wow, you just saved our lives! I would have gone right over the

side and down the cliff. Why, you cannot even see the bridge in this downpour.”

The man was tall, blond and had a square jaw, a rugged looking fellow. “You will have to turn back to the last corner, where the small town is and take a detour. Can you give me a lift back to that corner?”

Kosy was wide-eyed, “We could have gone down into the river. How horrible that would have been!” She was thanking the man over and over and wondered what in the world he was doing standing out in the thunders storm.

They went back to the corner and let the stranger out. Shane asked him what his name was. “My name is Orian. Now you kids be careful and trust God. Shane, you take good care of your little sister.” With that the stranger turned, bowed his head and walked briskly into the driving rain.

Shane looked baffled, “What just happened, little sister, I never told him my name. How did he know my name?” Then he looked at the seat beside him and there was a 50 dollar bill. Now he was totally in shock.

Shane shook his head and was jolted back to reality when he realized he was approaching the edge of Medford. He didn't want to take any chances of being stopped by the police. He kept his eyes on the road and barked out an appeal to Kosy.

"Kosy, keep your eyes peeled for police cars as we go through Medford," Shane ordered. "The old-timer at the gas

station said the police here are tough on teens."

"Sure, Shane, and what am I supposed to do if I see one, hide under a blanket in the back seat?"

"Here comes one towards us now," Shane moaned. "Don't get nervous. Look natural."

CHAPTER THREE FALSELY ACCUSED

"Whoa, he's looking right at you," Kosy complained. "Can't you look older or something? Good grief, he's turning around. Now he's got his light on." Kosy was beyond biting her nails, she was about to faint from an anxiety attack. If only they looked older, if only they WERE older.

Shane was getting nervous. "Oh brother, what am I going to do now?" His heart was pounding so hard it seemed like it would blow through his chest and land on the floor of the Chevy.

"Don't try to out run him, Shane," Kosy pleaded. "Please stop." She had gone through enough excitement in the last 24 hours, she didn't need any high speed car chase, as if the blue jay could really do it anyway!

"Out run him," Shane answered. "You've got to be kidding. I don't want to kill the squirrels in the rotor wheel up front." Shane tried to make light of the issue, but his nervous, squeaky voice was not very convincing. Kosy caught his fear and it just made her feel even more frightened, **like a very**



lost bird about to have the trap dropped on it.

Now he had to face the music and he did not like the tune that was playing. All he could think of was "I'm In the Jailhouse Now." He followed his instincts of preservation and pulled over to the side of the road, shutting off the motor to save gas. As the policeman approached, Shane could hear his own heart beating through his ears. He wondered if it was loud enough for Kosy to hear, too.

The policeman motioned for Shane to roll down the window. "Well, Sonny, what do we have here, two runaways? Your mother must be real worried about you. Where are you from and where are you going?" The officer was not smiling, he was huge in a domineering way, actually intimidating in his well groomed uniform.

"For one thing, our mother doesn't worry about us. All she does is think about herself," Shane tried to smile at the officer. "Our mother abandoned us in Hopland, California, so we are going to our Grandpa's farm in Lacombe, Oregon." Shane foolishly thought this would be a logical explanation and then the nice officer should let them go on their way. A little naive for sure.

"Let me see your driver's license, Sonny. If you don't have one, let me see your library card," the officer ordered. "You can't be over 15 years old. Why, you have to look through the steering wheel just to see the road." He pointed to the Chevy's steering column.

"Why didn't I listen to that old guy back at the station and sit on my pillow," Shane mused to himself. "I don't have a license. Did I break some law? Why did you stop me?" Now Shane was asking the questions.

The officer became suspicious. "No, you didn't break any law. It is just a bit strange, don't you think. A young teenage driving and out-of-state car at 6:30 in the morning. So, you don't have a license. Whose car is this? Give me the registration off the steering column." Shane fumbled around trying to get it off, not in much of a hurry, though.

Kosy was visibly nervous and almost in tears. "Would you please take it easy, officer," Shane pleaded in his most courteous voice. "You're scaring my little sister, and she doesn't need that. We are not runaways." He handed the officer the registration.

"What did you say your name was, Sonny?" the officer asked again.

"Why does everyone call me 'Sonny'?" Shane complained to himself. "My name is **Speedy Gonzales** and this is my sister Maria." As soon as the words were out of his mouth, Shane knew he had made a very serious mistake. Kosy slapped her forehead with her palm and gasped.

The officer's voice



demonstrated his impatience. "All right Speedy, out of the car and put your hands on the hood," the officer ordered harshly. "Maria, or whoever you are, quit crying. We'll get this all straightened out yet." He genuinely felt sorry for Kosy.

When Shane was frisked, the officer found his wallet, pulled out his library card, and chuckled to himself. "Okay, smart aleck, you are Shane T. Woods, and your card expires on June 10th. I hope you don't have any overdue books with you." Now the officer was being coy.

Shane was not amused. It was just their luck to get Medford's budding comedian as an arresting officer, assuming that was what was going to happen to them.

"Now, we have a problem here," the officer declared. "This car is registered to a Loretta Entner. Unless I need new glasses, you are not Loretta Entner. You stole this car, didn't you, kid?"

"No," Shane protested. "Our mother has had five boyfriends. I'm not even sure she goes by the name Entner even now. When she bought this car with my money, her common law name was Entner."

The policeman was not impressed. "We will have to straighten all this out down at the station. You two get in my car and I'll drive you over to headquarters." He figured it would be easy to get these kids to headquarters, he was about to be reeducated.

"But what about my car?" Shane complained. "Someone

might steal it. This car is more than steel and canvas. It's all we have."

The officer tried not to laugh. "You've got to be kidding, Sonny. The only persons interested in this car would be an blind antique dealer or a desperate junk man."

"Come on, officer, give me a break," Shane begged. "Someone might steal my tires. They're Double Eagles."

After a quick glance at the tires, the officer cracked, "Yeah, they're eagles all right - bald eagles!" Now the officer was losing the little patience he had. He hadn't had his morning allotment of donuts and his stomach was talking to him thinking his mouth was on strike!

"Please let me drive my car behind you. I will follow you to the station. I promise. You can take my sister as collateral." This was his best deal, he hoped it would be convincing.

Having been silent the whole time, Kosy finally piped in, "Thanks a lot, Shane. At least I can serve as a hostage."

"Okay, Shane," he countered, "I will drive in front of you. But don't try anything funny, or I promise you, your sister will graduate from reform school." That did not sit well with Kosy. She did not know what reform school was but she guessed it was not something to be desired.

Shane looked sheepish now. "We need to push the car. It has a dead battery. I usually park it on a hill so I can start it in gear." Shane crossed his fingers hoping the officer would buy into

his argument.

The officer looked dismayed. Is this kid for real, he is definitely pushing the limits of my tolerance. "You can't be serious kid! Now YOU give me a break."

Shane was desperate. "No,listen, I will help push, and so will Kosy. Then I'll jump in and pop the clutch in second gear. Okay? Please?" Kosy looked shocked to be an unexpected volunteer.

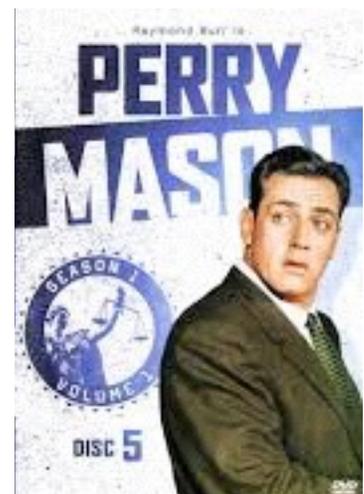
The officer gave in. He had to admire this kid's tenacity. "I must be the Good Samaritan of the month or have a soft head. Come on Sport, let's give it a try." With that, the officer headed to the rear of the Chevy and put his hands on the trunk.

Shane wasn't going to give him a chance to change his mind. "Jump out and help, Kosy." Shane swung the door open, ramming the stick shift into neutral. He began pushing as he guided the steering wheel.

At about fifteen miles per hour he jumped in and shoved it into second. It was too hard to cross his fingers now, he would have to think of some other form of luck. The gears complained a little. He popped the clutch, but the motor did not start. The car just grounded to a chugging stop.

Losing his patience, the

RAYMOND BURR PLAYED PERRY MASON, A TOUGH LAWYER. IT AIRED FOR NINE SEASONS AND MADE 271 EPISODES.



officer complained, "Do you know what you are doing, kid?"

"Yeah, I know. Let's try it again," Shane insisted as he hopped out and began pushing, not giving the officer a choice but to run behind helping; with Kosy trying to keep up.

Once again the car did not start. Then Shane noticed something amiss. "Oh no, he'd kill me if he knew." He then turned on the key. He jumped out, pushing as he promised, "It will start this time. I know it will. I promise."

The officer was losing his wind. He turned and put his back to the car, digging in like a hungry running back. Shane popped the clutch, and the sweet music of six powerful pistons relieved his mind. "Yippee, now I will follow you."

Kosy ran up to the car. "Are you sure you are coming along, Shane? You wouldn't leave me like Mom did, would you?" The concern in her voice just reflected the fear in her face and the brokenness in her heart.

"Don't worry, Little Sister. I will never leave you," Shane consoled her. "We are in this together - to the end. Don't tell the policeman, the reason it wouldn't start - the key was off."

"Shane, you're nuts," Kosy complained. "I busted my back for nothing." She ran ahead and jumped into the passenger side of the police car.

When Kosy got in the police car, she noticed that the unlucky officer was out of breath. "Your brother needs some driving lessons!" Kosy just gave him a sheepish smile and kept her

mouth shut. Shane owed her a favor now and she would be sure and collect later!

Shane followed the police car faithfully as Kosy gave anxious backward glances. "Poor little sister," Shane thought. "She is so insecure. Of course, she is. That could be expected, considering what she had been through."

The past again flew before his mind. It was not pleasant. Loretta had always tried to excuse herself by telling them they had it better than most kids living in Africa, or China, but that didn't really make him feel better. This was not Africa or China! This was the good old United States of America, where every child was supposed to have a good home and loving parents. It came with the territory, at least he always thought that.

Now where were they headed. He had not been successful in convincing the policeman that the "Bluebird" really belonged to them. Would he be more successful in convincing the people at the station? If not, just a phone call to Grandpa Woods would be sufficient to straighten out the whole matter. But would they let them go today? He wanted to be at farm before dark. His mind always ran to the worse case scenario, they locked up for quite a while and no one knowing about it - this was a nightmare thought, to be discarded as quickly as possible.

It was the Memorial Day weekend and he had plans on watching the **Indianapolis 500** on TV. He was nuts about cars and especially the hopped-up street cars that were driven by most well-

to-do teens. Shaking his head again to bring himself back into reality, Shane tried to put these pleasantries out of his mind and come up with some plan to get them out of Medford asap.



Medford was a medium sized city for the unpopulated state of Oregon. Oregon's total population is only one million and seventy per cent of those people live in the Portland area. The police station was only one mile away. As he pulled up to the front, Shane knew there was only one way to prove the car was not stolen - call Grandpa.

When he was entering the police station, Shane put his arm around his eleven-year-old sister. "Listen, Kosy, we have not broken any law except driving without a license, which is usually just a fifteen dollar fine. Hang in there Little Sister, I trust we will be out of here soon. Keep your fingers crossed." How was this going to work, Kosy thought. She knew they did not have the \$15.00.

The personnel at the station were not so easily convinced. The arresting officer placed Shane's wallet on the counter. "This kid is to be booked for driving a stolen vehicle without a license."

"Wait a minute," Shane protested. "I don't have a license, but the car belongs to us. It is NOT stolen. I bought it with my OWN money I earned hauling hay in Hopland, California."

"You can't prove that," the secretary argued. She did not like the idea of bantering with a teenage kid, she thought she was above this type of work. This was definitely an unpleasant task below her pay grade.

"If I could make just one phone call to Grandpa Woods, he could clear up all of this," Shane explained. "Come on, I watched enough Perry Mason to know that I have the right to make one phone call."

His TV logic was to no avail. Both of them were taken to a minor's ward, and the car was locked up in the police pound. As they approached the ward, Shane noticed a ten foot cyclone fence topped with barbed wire inclined inward and outward at 45 degrees. There were two German Shepherds roaming freely in the yard between the barred windows and the fence.

"Not exactly where I had intended to spend Memorial Day weekend," Shane protested vigorously, but to no avail. Why would they refuse to let him make ONE PHONE CALL? He knew his rights but there was no one to defend him, no one to plead THEIR cause.

"Look at those mean angry dogs," Kosy whined as she returned to biting her nails. She was definitely not okay and for this Shane's heart hurt even more for her than it did for himself.

Where was God? The God Orien told them to trust certainly was not close by.

The ward was homey enough, with normal worn-out, faded household furniture. A married couple cared for the unfortunate or undisciplined teens. Shane was assigned a room by himself. Kosy shared a room with a girl her age. There was no older brother by her side tonight to dry her young tears and whisper comforting words into her tender heart. This was a horrible situation.

It was Friday, and the Memorial Day weekend festivities were on everyone's mind. When Shane realized he was not going to be able to phone Grandpa Woods, he questioned the matron's understanding of the justice system. Where was Perry Mason when you needed him.

He entered his solitary room. There were no pictures on the walls. The bars on the windows gave the whole room an uncomfortable presence. He wondered how long he and little sister would be confined here. If there was a low point to all his low points, this was it. He turned and watched the mean looking matron as she closed the steel door with a thunderous authoritative clank. They were in jail now and not even Thomas knew about it, NOBODY knew.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BRICK YARD

Shane was rudely awakened by dogs barking loudly, right outside his window. He had spent the first twenty four hours locked in his room. They even brought all his meals to him. Maybe they were afraid he would escape, if he got the chance.

Even if he could escape, he wouldn't leave his little sister behind. Their mother had disappeared, abandoning him and his older brother Thomas to care for Kosette. Throughout her life Kosy had little to rejoice about. Shane was all she had left now. It was time to stick together. Thomas regretted leaving them to fend for themselves, but he did not have much of a choice. When the US Government called, he had to answer or be in BIG trouble.

Thomas had prepared them for the trip to Grandpa's farm. He wanted to drive them to Lacombe, but found it impossible. He was about to be drafted. He didn't want to dig foxholes, so he joined the Navy instead. Although he was whisked away to boot camp in San Diego, he promised to write and to spend his leave with them.

Shane eased out of bed and put his bare feet on the cold cement floor. He sauntered over to the barred window to check on the watch dogs. Looking across the street he could see the police pound. Bluejay was locked up, just like he was. Alone. He wondered where his mom was and wondered where Thomas was. He knew Thomas was in good shape, but he was sure his mom

was not.

It was only 6:30 AM and someone was already knocking at his door. "You have thirty minutes to shower and put on these work clothes before breakfast." The matron threw the Big Ben overalls on his bed. WORK! What work, Shane thought. I did not volunteer for any work crew. This is more than enough to handle, he wanted to talk to his lawyer.



"Certainly they will let me phone Grandpa now," Shane considered as he grabbed his "work clothes" and headed for the shower at the end of the hall. "What exactly did she mean by 'work clothes,' I hope I didn't really hear that."

Kosy snickered as she saw Shane enter the dining hall in the oversized farm dungarees. He sat next to her. **"I hate overalls. How was your evening, Little Sister?"**

Kosy was moist-eyed, "I didn't get right to sleep. I cried a lot. I missed Thomas and you. Oh, Shane, what are we going to do?" With that discouraging tone, Kosy couldn't hold it in any longer. She began to weep. "If it wasn't bad enough before, now we are a couple of JAILBIRDS."

Kosy began her famous tirade. "What kind of a mother would do to us what ours has? I hate her. She has made a jailbird out of me and I am only eleven years old."

Shane put his arm around her. He sure loved his litter sister. Thomas and he had pretty much been left in care of the caboose of

the family. "We can't phone Grandpa, and we can't get out of here. I'm sure that eventually we will get to Grandpa's farm, but who knows how long it will take." Shane did not want to alarm his little sister but facts were facts and he did not see any advantage of hiding "facts" from her.

"Did you see those big dogs outside your window?" Kosy tilted her head towards the yard. "Do you think they are fed on a regular basis? I kept having nightmares about them biting me."

"Oh, I'm sure they feed them well," he consoled her, "Although they certainly do look vicious, don't they? Do you see that phone by the sink in the kitchen? Maybe, when no one is looking, I can get a call through to Grandpa."

It wasn't going to be that easy for them. The matron wasn't nicknamed "Old Eagle Eye" for nothing. If Shane was ever going to make a call, he would have to start a fire in the other part of the building as a diversion. That entered His mind for only a few seconds. Surely there must be a simpler way.

After breakfast Kosy was ushered to the kitchen to do dishes. Shane was taken outside to the "brick yard." He was coldly directed to a wheelbarrow and to a mountain of bricks that were laying on the ground, about to mock his liberty and ruin his holiday week-end.

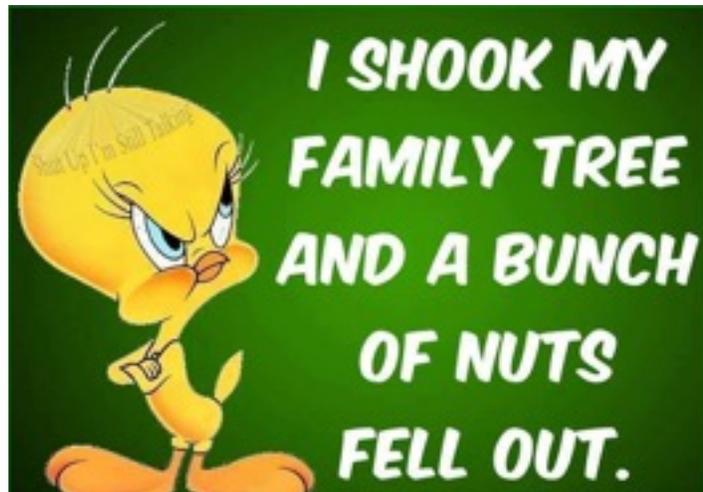
The matron was as cold as an iceberg and stoically stern, "Now Sonny, you will work here until noon with a fifteen minute break from 9:30 to 9:45. Your job is to fill the wheelbarrow and

haul the bricks to the other side of the yard, emptying them there. You have to work here until this whole pile is over yonder." She pointed to where "over yonder" was. It was 100 yards down hill from his present location. Going down wouldn't be so hard after all.

Shane was not impressed. "Then what do I do?"

The matron forced a smile, revealing the wide spaces separating her front teeth. "Then, Sonny, you can return all the same bricks to this side of the yard." Whammo! That was the catch, on the return trip it would be up hill, not so easy!

"What for?" Shane asked with a scowl. "You mean I'm supposed to keep moving the bricks from one side of the yard to the other. Seems ridiculous! A waste of time and energy.



You must think my family tree is full of nuts." Shane thought this logic would surely change the orders of the day. He was dreadfully wrong.

"You break the law. You pay the price. This is to keep you busy. A sound body makes a sound mind. Right?" Shane was baffled, Where did this lady grow up, Nazi Germany, Moscow?

Shane was justly perturbed now. "But I didn't break any law except driving without a license. That is usually just a fine. And why won't they let me make a phone call to my grandfather? He could straighten out all this confusion." He was pleading his case to the wrong jury. The stone faced, husky, hunky matron was not interested in his court room arguments.

The matron was not moved, she was even more determined to make this punk pay for breaking the law. "That ain't the way I heard it, Sonny. I heard that you stole a car and all the gas it took to get from San Diego to here."

"Good grief, that's not even close to the truth," he protested in vain as he was handed the wheelbarrow. How did the true story get so distorted. It reminded him of the "gossip game" he played with his friends, repeating the story from one kid to another ended up with a version much different than the original

"Get to work kid. You have a lot of bricks to move. Well, what



**SHANE DIDN'T MIND HARD WORK,
HE JUST DESPISED WASTING HIS
TIME MOVING BRICKS WHERE
THERE WAS NO POINT TO IT
EXCEPT TO KEEP HIS "CRIMINAL
MIND" BUSY!**

are you standing there gawking for? Didn't you hear me? Get to work." She was about to move closer so Shane could hear her better, but Shane took two

steps backwards and looked a bit more submissive.

Shane looked at his tender, smooth hands, "Don't you even have some gloves I can use? These bricks are not exactly smooth, you know!"

The matron grinned again and just walk away shaking her head, leaving Shane standing there looking baffled and mistreated. This was going to be a hard day, he could feel it in his bones.

Medford is located in south central Oregon, at the end of the Willamette Valley. It is hot and humid in the month of May. The farmers are planting their crops expecting the weatherman to cooperate. Fishing season just started on Crabtree Creek. Shane won't be throwing in a line for a while yet!

Shane sweat profusely as the sun beat down on his uncovered head. "I wish I had my San Francisco Giants ball cap. I'm probably going to get a sun stroke out here in this heat." He worked meaninglessly until lunch time. Manuel labor was not a problem for him, it is just this chain gang forced labor that made his blood boil.

At the table he discovered it would be his turn to wash dishes after supper. He whispered to Kosy, "Well, at least I will be able to get my hands clean again. If you keep your fingers crossed, and we are lucky, maybe I can get to that phone on the wall." With his nose, Shane pointed to the place on the kitchen wall where the phone was hanging.

"What do you want me to do?" Kosy gulped hard, reaching

for a fingernail to chew. Shane grabbed her hand. "I've told you to stop that horrible habit. Your nervousness will give us away. While I am doing dishes, try to distract Old Hawk Eye long enough for me to get that call through to Grandpa." Kosy put both of her hands behind her back so she would not nibble on her nails.

Lunch was over and the matron was motioning to Shane, "Back to the brick yard. There's a lot of work to be done before sundown." The attempted phone call would definitely be put on the schedule for later. This gave Kosy more time to give herself a real manicure, while Shane was not watching.

"Really don't you have some gloves I can use, my hands are blistered?" Shane pleaded heartily "Those bricks are very rough." Someone just laughed out loud. The afternoon dragged on until supper time.

Washing dishes was not Shane's "forte." Kosy was in the corner of the dinning hall explaining to Old Hawk Eye how they got to Medford. She was pleading for a chance to call Grandpa Woods, but it was in vain, falling on deaf ears that were used to saying "NO" to wayward teens. Shane made a daring move to the phone, hiding his body behind a pillar. Help me out Kosy!

He dialed the operator. "I would like to make a collect call to John Woods in Lacombe. No, I don't have his number. Yes, I'll stand by." His heart was beating so fast it might have ran right out of his chest.

Every minute was an eternity for Shane as he kept his eyes

glued to Kosy and Old Hawk Eye. "Come on, hurry up. I have only a little more time," Shane pleaded religiously. Praying was not his practice, if it would have been, this was an excellent opportunity to do it.

The operator came back, "I have the number now. Would you like to make a note of it for future reference?"

Shane was really nervous now. If biting his fingernails would have helped, he would have trimmed them off to the first knuckle. "No, just make the call please."

He kept his attention on the corner and crossed his fingers. The operator returned. "It's ringing now. Stand by." It was working, he had fooled them. Yippie, it was going to be over soon.

Shane recognized his grandmother's voice. "Yes, I will accept a collect call from Shane."

"Hello, Grandmother, we are in trouble...." CLICK! What happened? Shane had forgotten to pay close attention to an attack from the rear. Another guardian of the law ripped the phone from his hands.

"What are you doing, kid?" the matron yelled right in his ear. "You can't use the phone without permission. Finish the dishes, and right after that you will spend the rest of today and all day tomorrow locked in your room. You can't break the rules and get by with it."

Kosy did her best. She wept as Shane was ushered to his room. She would not see him until Sunday night. As the matron

closed the door on Shane, he blurted out, "Are you at least going to let me listen to the Indianapolis 500, right?" This was his plea for some leniency, but it fell on deaf, hardened ears.

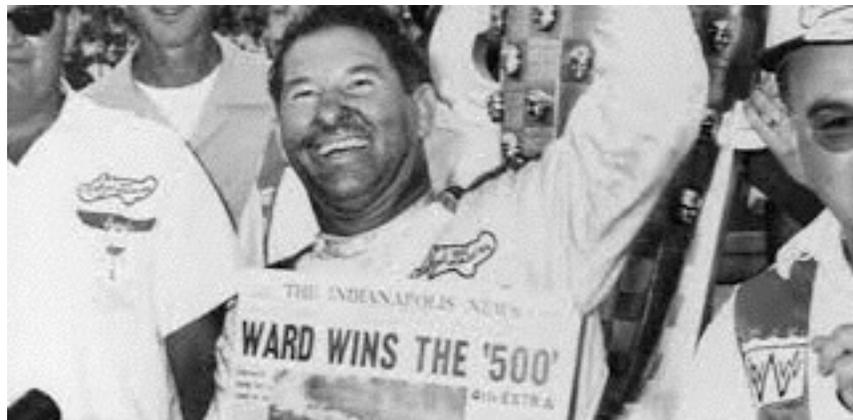
The matron was not bothered, "This kid is nuts." She had seen these kids come through the system all the time, each one trying to finagle their way through the house rules and each one expecting some kind of special treatment. Well this kid was not going to fool her, she was wise to his tricks.

When he was released, he joined Kosy, who was watching Woody Woodpecker. Shane had been shut off from the outside world for the duration of his solitary confinement. That is what solitary confinement means.

Shane approached his sister. "Who won the big race, Kosy?"

"You missed it, Shane," Kosy said. **"Roger Ward won.** And don't ask me who he is. I have never heard of him. His average speed was one hundred forty miles per hour. Not that I am terribly interested. I listened and kept notes for you because I knew you would want a report."

Shane was really impressed. "That's why you are such a good sister. You are always looking after me. I know



who Roger Ward is. He also won it in 1959. Thanks, Sis. Now we can plan strategy on how to reach Grandpa. I have not given up." Giving up was not a part of this abandoned kid's personality. He was tenacious to a fault, never giving up. This is what Kosy admired so much about her older brother.

"We haven't tried smoke signals yet," Kosy suggested with a giggle. "But that would take a fire and an Indian." This really



shocked Shane, Kosette being frivolous! This was so much out of character for her, especially when she was so disturbed.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, dragged by. The routine was the same: move bricks, remove bricks, and move bricks again. Running down the hill with the wheelbarrow and huffy and puffy up the hill on the return trip.

At supper time on Thursday, each person was given paper and a pen. "Write someone you know," the matron suggested. "Maybe Dad or Mom." Someone must be missing you. Was she showing a small measure of compassion or was this a house rule handed down from the top, not giving her a choice.

"I don't even know my dad, and my mom is not to be found," Shane thought. "But I can write my grandpa." Shane penned a short note to him:

**Dear Grandpa Woods,
Kosy and I are being held at a reform school in Medford.
All I did wrong was drive MY Chevy without a license.
Since Mom's last name is not the same as mine, they
insist that I stole my car. Can you come and get us?
Your grandchildren, Shane and Kosy**

All letters were censored. On Friday, Shane was called to the counselor's office without knowing why. The Doctor of Psychology, **Dr. Moe Brains**, extended a long, bony hand for him to shake and motioned for Shane to sit down. Shane obeyed. He ran his hands over the arms of the chair. Shane noticed that the leather was about as worn out as his patience.

The counselor started doing his job. "I have the letter to your Grandpa Woods. What's the matter anyway? Don't you like it here?"

"What?" Shane shook his head in disbelief. Years of being knocked from pillar to post had chipped away all of his trust in people. He didn't



really know this man, and couldn't hardly believe what he was hearing. "All I have done wrong is drive without a license. You won't let me make a phone call to clear up the stolen car charges. And, personally, I can think of a hundred thousand other places where I would rather be. I don't deserve to be here. Why can't I phone my grandfather?"

"You entered here at an unfortunate time," the counselor reasoned weakly. "We have had a long weekend, and we are short on personnel. Vacations and such, you know. I will phone your grandfather now."

Shane knew these people were making excuses and trying to save face. He could let that pass. All he wanted to do was get as many miles between him and Medford as possible. This would always be one of his most unfavorite towns, for sure!

Within a few minutes, the counselor had Grandma Woods on the phone. "Your two grandchildren, Shane and Kosy, are being held here because of some unanswered questions. By the way, what is Shane's mother's name? Entner. Uh huh, all right, that answers one of the major questions."

The counselor seemed to be on Shane's side. "Someone has to come here and drive the car. Bring proof of insurance. Mr. Woods will come then, by Greyhound, tomorrow. I will transfer you to our release department to make sure all the details are taken care of."

Shane was relieved and almost mustered up a smile. It had

been bad enough to be falsely accused, but to have to slave in that brick yard was too much! Only a fool would enjoy such worthless labor. He was not lazy but on the other hand he was no one's fool either.

The counselor continued, "Yes, Kosy and Shane are fine. And Shane is a good brick hauler. We hate to lose him." He hoped the counselor was just trying to be funny because he was not amused at all.

Shane was elated to tell Kosy. "We'll be out of here tomorrow afternoon, when Grandpa comes to get us. He will drive our car home."

They hugged each other, and Kosy let loose with a few tears of joy. Shane's rejoicing was soon interrupted when he was again ushered back to the counselor's office.

The counselor was kinder this time, and less critical. "What can you tell me that will allow me to understand your situation? Possibly it will help me to counsel others who have similar problems."

Since the man seemed sincere, and was the only one who had helped them, Shane decided to be a bit transparent. "Thomas is seventeen, I am fifteen and Kosette is eleven. Our dad abandoned us when I was only six. Kosy had just been born."

"Mom has a serious drinking problem. She had many times," Shane continued. "We were left at our grandpa's for several years while Mom was wandering around."

"Grandpa made little money, therefore, we had to work in the fields to buy our school clothes at Polly Potters Used Clothing Store. During school days we helped Grandpa with the chores as much as we could."

The counselor was listening intently as he wrote Shane's comments on a yellow note pad. "How do you feel about your grandparents?"

"My grandparents are dear people who have loved us and truly sacrificed a great deal for us. I love them."

"Do you hate your mother, Shane?" he asked, expecting an affirmative answer.

Shane thought for a long time. "I have no feelings whatsoever for my mother. I don't love her, nor can I hate her. But Kosy has some very strong feelings against Mom, feelings of deep hatred. What I have missed dearly are what many people consider the most precious parts of life - family, home, birthday parties, generations at the table, holidays with relatives and rough housing with my cousins."

The counselor began counseling. "It is very easy for young people like you to be bitter. You'll have to deal with your feelings or they will control your emotions and destroy your life."

"A good memory can be a curse. It would be much better if it fogged dark valleys and only lit up the mountain tops. But since reality is not that way, you need to learn by mistakes and go forward. Shane, you are not a fool because you make mistakes,

you are only one if you don't learn anything, causing you to repeat them. It's a truth you can learn on my dime, if you want to?"

Shane wasn't sure he understood everything the counselor was trying to tell him. He did think his sister needed some defending. "Kosy wasn't born hating our mother. She developed that feeling as a reaction to Mom's drinking and carelessness."



Jack and Julia Taylor, my beloved grandparents. I lived with them when my mom was in prison and also when she abandoned me at 16 years old, when we lived in Hopland, California. They owed me nothing but gave me the refuge I needed. Grandpa was a lumberjack and after that a diesel mechanic at the Snow Peak Lumber Company, located behind our farm. He was the only man that had a good influence on me during my whole adolescence life. He also was a fervent protector of his family. Julia was a great fisherwoman and hunter of the white tailed deer. Her cooking was fabulous, especially her waffles, pancakes, bread, and chocolate nothing cake. I walked 10 miles one winter night, getting home at 2:00 AM to get the last piece of that cake. I loved these two with all my heart and soul.

CHAPTER FIVE

GRANDPA TO THE RESCUE

It was a bright Friday afternoon. Oceans of deep blue sky swirled with pale silver clouds. Hot and humid. This kind of weather made Shane feel lazy; like all he wanted to do was sit on a slab of rock and let his feet dangle in Crabtree Creek. He felt like having a water fight, or dropping a line in the cool creek, hoping to fool a rainbow trout.

Shane had spent all morning in the brick yard. They did not want to fall behind in their worthless labor camp. He was allowed the afternoon off, to get cleaned up. The matron wanted him to be ready, and in good humor when Grandpa Woods came to take him home.

HOME - That wonderful, fictional place that now and then had eluded the Woods kids. When a child has lived in sixteen different places in fifteen years he has had no home, no roots, no close friends. If one has had six different step fathers, virtually, he has had no father.

The only fond memories Shane had of his childhood were of the years he spent on his



grandfather's farm on the banks of Crabtree Creek in Lacombe, Oregon.

LACOMB - A town so small that both population signs used the same post. The town, if you could even call it that, had one gas station called Townsend's Oil Co.



It had also been a general store that Mr. Townsend senior had operated until it closed. Now the oil company was run by Mr. Townsend Jr. He was training his boys to take over after him. They also sold sporting goods.

The general store was located across from the oversized closet called a post office. It was a place where Shane knew everyone and his mail only had to have his last name. Lacombe, is the last town before the Snow Peak Wilderness, seventeen miles from Lebanon.

LEBANON was a logging town. Three huge plywood mills, running full steam, surrounded the city. Behind each mill is a pond where one can snag foot-long bull frogs during the day and struggle with thirteen inch catfish at night. Lebanon is located in Linn County.

Peppered throughout Linn County are small privately owned



lumber mills, each with their own pond. The mill pond water is so clear the salamanders can be seen scurrying across the bottom ten feet below. The mills usually produce cedar roof shakes. The worthless

sawdust is slowly burned in **cone shaped furnaces**, that forever send swirls of gray smoke into the air.

These were some of the reasons why Shane loved the area so much. There were roots, relatives, swimming, hunting, and fishing. All the things he enjoyed. And there were Grandpa and Grandma Woods, who made this kind of life style fun.

The Woods kids could hardly wait until Grandpa arrived. "Are you ready, Kosy? Grandpa will be here any minute," Shane assured her, as he took one last look in the mirror, combing down his blond wavy hair, apparently inherited from Loretta. It was one of the good things she had given him.



At 2:00 PM Grandpa Woods arrived and was greeted with

open arms by two lonely grandchildren. His joy in seeing them was only exceeded by their happiness at being rescued by him.

Grandpa was anxious to get on the road. "We need to get the release papers from the office so they don't ask for a refund when we get home."

He got their belongings, including Shane's library card. Then proceeded to give the director a piece of his mind. "I can't believe that my two grandchildren spent a whole week in your jail without any opportunity to contact me, so they could clear themselves. All I have to say is, **YOU'RE VERY LUCKY THAT I AM A CHRISTIAN!**"

"If I wasn't I would sue your pants off. I am really ticked off and there is no explanation good enough to make me calm down." Shane had learned a long time ago that it was not safe, not even a smart idea to mess with anyone in Grandpa's family. He was a fierce defender of his children and grandchildren. At last, Shane felt safe again.

"Well, we certainly are sorry for any inconvenience we have caused you and your grandchildren," the director apologized. "This isn't really a jail, it is just a detention home"

Jack Woods was livid. "Don't tell me it is not a **JAIL**, just look at the guard dogs and forced labor. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

The director had **NO** defense, no retort. He just hung his head to avoid eye contact with the kids **DEFENDER**. "Here are the release papers and car keys. You can pick up the old jalopy at the

police parking lot across the street. By the way, fill up the tank with gas, courtesy of the department." The director was trying to get himself off the hook a bit and end this unfortunate experience on a positive note. He was not sure he accomplished this after he actually looked Grandpa in the eyes and saw his utter determination to defend his grandchildren. It was better to just keep quiet now.

The 1951 blue Chevy convertible was not much to look at. The boys had purchased it for only \$225, and still owed \$125. When they bought it, the tires were a bit slick. Now they were threadbare. The motor was in its declining years and the seats in their reclining years. The black canvas top needed replacing. The milage read only three thousand. Thomas was not sure if it was one hundred or two hundred thousand and three thousand. But, at least the radio worked but you could not use the high beams or they would flicker for lack of juice.

The very first day they had the car, they were forced to park it on a hill. The battery was a bit weak and never seemed to charge up. The worn out convertible wasn't much, but it was all they had. It was something they could call their own. Bluejay gave them a small feeling of importance. Now it was all Shane's.

Thomas had relinquished his half to Shane. He would not need a car where he was going. Thomas had hopes of eventually being a member of the Underwater Demolition Team - the SEALs. Shane and Kosy were so proud of him. He was the responsible

one in their dysfunctional family. He was their rock, their only escape to reality and safety. Now he was gone and they would miss him dearly.

There it sat in all its beauty, imprisoned inside the police compound. A young officer was unlocking the gate. "I used to have a '51 Chevy when I was just married. These cars sure attract attention, especially convertibles. They are very, very durable." This was a different officer than the one that had arrested Shane and Kosy. He seemed to be nice enough, but Shane did not want to hang around Medford long enough to find out.

Shane opened the car door, turned on the key and gave a quick glance at the amp meter. He made a face that no one else could see. "The battery has been sitting idle for a week. I believe it is almost dead. Officer, could you help push it backwards?"

The officer moved to the front, putting his hands on the hood. "Sure, Sonny, but you only get one try out of me, not three. Put it in reverse. When I yell, pop the clutch, but don't rev the motor up enough to take out our fence." Apparently the word had gotten around about the first attempt to start the car in Medford. Shane was only a little amused.

Grandpa and Kosy were also going to help push. On her way past Shane, Kosy checked to see if the key was on. "I'm not going to break my back on this thing again." She always said she was not too smart but certainly was not stupid either.

Just a short backward movement and the officer yelled.

Shane popped the clutch and the Chevy fired up. Grandpa peeked his head through the window. "Don't let it die, Shane. Keep pumping the gas. Pull out the throttle a bit so I can crawl behind the wheel. Kosy, hop in. We're out of here."

Putting things behind him was getting to be a habit for Shane. He was always being introduced to a new school, and new friends. It seemed that he was forever saying goodbye to what had recently become familiar surroundings. This made for few friends and no traditions. A life style like this was not what he had wanted, NEVER! Who wants to live without roots, without friends and without a sober mother - none of the Woods kids did but they had not been part of the decision making process.

This move was made with great anticipation. Free at last! Shane was adamant, "I was not made to be kept behind bars with the noise of hungry-eyed German Shepherds breaking up my wonderful dreams."

Kosy piped in with her two cents. "Grandpa, I love you so much for coming and getting us out of that jail. I was so scared that we would be there until I was a teenager!"

Medford, Oregon, would always be the city at the bottom of Shane's favorite list. "If I never see this place again it will be too soon." Kosy seconded the motion to make Medford the most unpopular town on their list - so there, she did it.

With Grandpa behind the wheel they headed north out of town. They would stay on highway 99 to Eugene, then Corvallis,

Lebanon, Lacombe, and home to Grandma's baked bread and strawberry jam.

Shane leaned forward to turn on the radio. Grandpa spoke up, "Shane, you can't run that tube radio and expect this old battery to stay charged. Those vacuum tubes suck all the energy your generator produces, leaving nothing to charge up your battery. You'll have to stop using the radio, or buy yourself a brand new battery."

Shane forced a smile. "Since I'm a bit short on funds I'll leave it off for now. But the Giants are playing the Cards tonight. I guess I can read about it in the *Lebanon Express*, right?"



"Sure, but remember your Grandma's still a **Dodger fan.**" Shane had not forgotten. Grandma was a Brooklyn Dodger fan through and through. That automatically made her a die hard Yankee hater. Don't even try to change her mind.

Shane was stroking his chin when he looked Grandpa right in the face. "What did I hear you say to the man in the office? You make some mention about being a Christian. What exactly do you mean? I've never heard you say anything like that before."

Grandpa Woods knew he would eventually have to explain this new turn of events. "There have been some changes in our lives."

"Did you and Grandma get religious?" Shane had not enjoyed living with a drinking mom, but he was not sure he would like living with a religious fanatic either. He had to find out what was going on. Something had changed. He was not sure this change would be something he would like, or not

Grandpa responded defensively, "No, that is not exactly what I had in mind to tell you. You will notice some changes in our life style. We certainly hope you will still love us anyway." That was about all Grandpa wanted to say right now. It was more important to give these war-torn kids some feeling of security right now.

Kosy was moist-eyed again. "Grandpa, we already owe you more than we can ever repay. Thank you for coming to get us out of that jail. We will always love you."

"I know it has not been easy for you two," Grandpa confessed. "From here on out we want you to stay with us." This was not the first time Grandpa and Grandma had taken these kids under their wings. But Jack Woods had already determined that this time they would NOT give them up again, NEVER AGAIN.

"Really!" Kosy said gleefully. "You mean we are finally going to have a home, a dad and a mom? We are going to get to go to the Strawberry Fair again. Do they still have the world's largest strawberry shortcake?"

Grandpa really loved his tender-hearted granddaughter. "Well Missy, we will never be your dad and mom, but we can always be your grandpa and grandma. And yes, you can call our farm your home,



and YES, Lebanon still has **the world's largest strawberry shortcake** and you are going to get a slice of it, maybe even two!"

Jack meant it with all his being. He was determined to make this the last time he would have to rescue these wonderful children, his greatly missed and loved grandchildren.

That would be a pleasant change. Maybe for the first time in a long while they would complete a full year in one school. At least Shane would have some friends at Lebanon High. He had attended six different grammar schools in the Lebanon area already, before they moved out of state and out of mind.

"Are you kids getting hungry?" Grandpa asked. "We have been traveling for three hours and we have two hours to go. We can stop and get a hamburger in Cottage Grove." He knew he would not get any arguments from these hungry kids, and he didn't.

He got loud, affirmative cheers from two stomach-growling grandchildren. Kosy liked hamburgers any time of the day. Big

ones with lots of onions and catchup. "Will Grandma be glad to see us?"

"You kids know how your grandmother feels about you," Grandpa bragged. "She is already baking fresh bread.



Sunday after church we'll have your favorite - pot roast, mashed potatoes and **apple pie with a BIG scoop of ice cream on top.** What do you think of that? Sound good?" He was describing a normal Sunday lunch at the Woods farm, a lunch Shane and Kosy had many times and missed more than Grandma could imagine.

"CHURCH!" Kosy responded. "We're going to church on Sunday! But, Grandpa, I don't know what I'll wear. I don't have anything nice. How long have you and Grandma been going to church?" She was not sure if she liked this idea, was she going to be a religious person now.

Grandpa began to explain. "Do you remember that little green house you lived in, Shane? It was half way up the hill at Five Corners. You were only in the first grade."

"I do remember. That was where I stepped in a hornet's nest and was stung a hundred times. No one could forget a very terrible experience like that." That steep hill was good for coasting

down on a bike, unless you wiped out. Then you spent the rest of the week picking stones and dirt out of the palms of your hands."



"Yes, that is the one," Grandpa agreed. "Do you remember an elderly man coming by and picking you up for Sunday School? He had a **1939 candy apple red Ford**. Remember? It had one door on each side, and he would always get out to let you in the back."

Shane nodded. "I vaguely remember. Wasn't the church white and located across from the grocery store?"

"You're exactly right," Grandpa continued. "But they are not located there anymore. They recently moved to the other side of town. The old Baptist Church is now a Grange Hall. Also, do you remember my youngest brother Tom?"

Shane was following Grandpa's story now. "Is he the one that used to drive in the stock car races?" Shane had always liked sitting in the stock cars at his great uncle's house. He would pretend he was zooming around the dirt track.

Grandpa continued his explanation, "Well, he's been born again for ten years, and has been witnessing to us. Finally, we understood the grace of God through Jesus Christ."

Kosy spoke up, "Wasn't Thomas named after Great Uncle Tom?" She was trying to be a part of the family history lesson. Imagine, she thought, we are going to be part of a family after all, this is going to be GREAT. Now maybe she can finally be happy, stop crying and enjoy life like real families do.



"Your mom made that decision," Grandpa said. "Well, my brother Tom went to Bible college and now he's a missionary in **southern Brazil.**"

Kosy appreciated the story, but didn't want to miss her hamburger. "Don't forget to stop, Grandpa."

Shane pointed to the left of the road. "There is the A&W, Grandpa. Wow, that must be exciting living in Brazil. You'd get to play with tarantulas and all that stuff. I think they are good in soccer, right?"

Grandpa did not answer the question because he did not know the answer. He pulled up to the A & W stall. He wanted to finish the subject before the girl came to take their order. "Your grandmother and I have spent quite some time searching for the truth. We never found anything to satisfy our spiritual needs."

"What did Uncle Tom say that helped?" Shane asked as he

read the menu. He was trying to convince Grandpa that he was really interested in what was being said.

Grandpa was glad for Shane's interest. Perhaps this would be easier than he had figured. "He always told me that we needed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We went to hear Tom when he spoke at the Lacombe Baptist Church. We accepted Christ. When we found the answer to our sin problem, we were given eternal life." With that bold statement a concerned grandpa held his breath.

Both kids looked at each other and then ordered their food. They were comfortable with Grandpa Woods, but they didn't know what to think of this "religion" thing. Loretta never took them to church, she avoided church like it was a pole cat. She never prayed with them and never talked about God to them. These kids were like a blank page spiritually. Maybe Grandpa and Grandma would be able to write something meaningful on these tender hearted blank pages.

An A&W Drive Inn is a welcome sight to any traveler. Shane especially liked their huge, frosted glass mugs. The delicious root beer always came with a foam cap running over the side of the glass. It was fun



time again! "I'll take a mountain of fries with my burger."

Before Kosy and Shane could get a bite, Grandpa Woods bowed his head and prayed for the food. "This was really going to be different," Shane thought to himself. Praying, this was something Shane knew nothing about and was not sure if he wanted to start learning. He had no interest in God or religion, it never seemed that God had been interested in him and his siblings. They didn't want to get home too late so, the french fries would be finished as they hit the road.

The closer Shane got to the farm, the more familiar landmarks he recognized. They passed Brewster's Corner, **Wimpy's store and walk-in freezer**, Green Mountain School, and the Snow Peak Lumber Company Road.



They finally crossed Crabtree Creek, and past the Sleen farm. Dennis and Beverly Sleen were the only other people on Grandpa's side of the river. Shane was really getting excited. He knew he was home at last, for good! "I love this farm, Grandpa. It is the only home I have ever known and ever want to know again. He was getting teary eyed but he blinked rapidly to hide it. He got goosebumps as they crossed the bridge on Crabtree Creek.

The kids flew out of the car and were greeted by a relieved

grandmother. "What happened, Shane? Why didn't you talk to me on the phone? We tried to trace the call but it was not possible. Welcome home kids." There were many unashamed tears.

Shane hugged his grandmother. "Grandpa and I will explain all of it to you. Boy, am I glad to see you and to be here." There was no way to explain how full of joy these two kids were to be here on Grandpa's farm, away from the drinking and the horrible lifestyle that accompanied it.

Settling into the familiar surroundings was fun for Shane and Kosy. First, they had to greet the dog Sparky and the twelve cats that roamed the farm.

They passed the big cedar tree that rubbed up against the front porch. There was still a scar about the size of a softball on its trunk. When he was in the third grade, **Shane had hammered nails right into the trunk.** He still remembered being disciplined for his imprudence. The nail heads were still visible.



The door opened into the kitchen. The smell of fresh baked bread hit them like a brick. The pleasing aroma caused smiles and brought appetites to the forefront. What fond memories Shane had of this kitchen and the wonderful meals grandma cooked. The

house was not big. It was even a little cluttered, but it sure was a sight for sore eyes.

Since all of the Woods children were gone, there would be a room for Kosy and a smaller one for Shane. Later that night Shane thanked his grandparents again. For the first time in a long time, his eyes had a twinkle in them. "Are you still working at the Snow Peak Lumber Company, Grandpa?"

"I am now the head mechanic for all the equipment. Right now we are having a serious problem with robbery. Tools and dynamite have been stolen. Do you remember Jeff Thibaudeau, the property guard? He lived on the hillside, across from our shop."

"Isn't he the one who would come here with his wife on Saturday nights?" Shane asked.

"He left here last Saturday about midnight. When he got home he saw a car tear out from behind the shed. He chased it and made the driver stop. Leaving the radio on, he got out to talk to the men in the car. His wife heard three shots and then silence. She called me about 2:00 AM. We found Jeff dead in his pick-up. These men are really dangerous."



**MY GRANDSON, TIAGO JOE LATHAM,
STANDING ON THE SNOW PEAK BRIDGE.
THE CRABTREE CREEK CHANNELS ARE
VISIBLE.**

CHAPTER SIX

A CLOSE CALL

Shane could hear the old rooster crowing and smell the coffee brewing before his feet hit the floor. "Waffles! Isn't that your usual Sunday breakfast, Grandma?"

Julia Woods turned another checkered delight. "Yes, and we will have time to enjoy them if you can get Kosy out of bed. We don't want to be late for church."



Shane hurried Kosy. There was hardly a better breakfast in the world than Grandma's waffles and homemade strawberry syrup, unless it was Grandma's pancakes with **boysenberry** syrup.

The kids were excited riding to church. In the daylight they could see old landmarks that brought back fond memories. Crabtree Creek was low as they crossed the old wooden bridge made from huge fir trees. Snow Peak Mountain was still white at the very tip. Hammond Lumber Camp was out of operation, but people still lived in the weather-worn, shingle-sided homes.

Green Mountain School was just closing down for the summer. The local strawberry and **blackcap patches** were getting

their daily shower. The ever present water was being pumped from the roadside irrigation ditch. It was a lovely day, and Shane was glad to be alive. He was finally "home" in the country again. He thought his heart would bust for joy.



OREGON BLACKCAPS

They arrived at church in time for Shane and Kosy to be introduced to the families and the new pastor. Grandma talked to those standing near. "These are my dear grandchildren from sunny California. They will be living with us for a loooong time." Both kids were smiling from ear to ear, especially hearing the part about the loooooooooooooong time.

Pastor Ballentine was introducing the Woods grandkids to the others at church. Shane paid more attention when he started talking about the Lynch family. "They just arrived from Belgrade, Montana. They live at the foot of Gentry's Hill where the five roads meet. Mr. Lynch is the ad agent for the Lebanon Express. He is also an amateur photographer."

"His children are good horsemen, and Marty here is an excellent free-style wrestler. Erin is a freshman and will be on the swimming team. They live on the Rocking L Ranch, at Five

Corners."

Shane noticed that Erin was very cute. **Her long, fiery, red hair lay lazily on her petite shoulders.** She wore a black hat, shading her flashing eyes. When their eyes met, Shane stared so long at her that her cheeks began to redden. Her smile was like a friendly welcome. He had never dated a girl. Was it time to start now? This looked like a good place to begin! He had never been in a place long enough to get to know any kids, let alone girls.



He clumsily thrust out his hand. "Its . . . its going to be great to have some teens living so close." Shane's stare seemed to have a mesmerizing effect on Erin. She finally jerked her pretty head, shook his hand with enthusiasm and relaxed.

Marty seemed amused that Shane had completely forgotten about him. He gave Shane a surly glance and slapped him on the back. "Don't forget that Erin has a brother." Everyone enjoyed the moment.

On the way home Shane questioned Grandpa about Erin and her family. "Do you know them well? Are they friendly? Does Marty have a car of his own? Do they like to fish and hunt?"

"Whoa, slow down a bit, Shane. What do I look like, the

director of Lacombe's Welcome Wagon? They have only been coming to church for a few months," Grandpa answered. "They seem like a nice family. Did you take any certain notice of a particular freshman girl, or were you just asking in general?" Grandpa was amused at Shane's immediate interest in Erin.

Shane began to blush a little. "Well, she is really cute. After lunch can Kosy and I go swimming at the Snow Peak Bridge?" Shane was quickly trying to change the subject and prevent more embarrassing questions.

After pot roast, mashed potatoes and apple pie, Grandpa finally answered Shane's question. "You can go, but you'll have to walk. I can't let you drive Bluejay until you get a driver's license and some insurance."

Shane didn't like the idea of walking. "Can we take Old Red? I can ride fairly well, and the logging trucks don't run on Sunday. We'll be careful not to over work him." Kosy was crossing her fingers behind her back. This is the best she was ever able to do to wish for the desires of her heart.

"The saddle is in the shed by the cooler. Can you handle it?" Grandpa asked as Shane grabbed a bit and headed for the barn. Although it had been some time since they had ridden a horse, Shane still managed to mount up and give Kosy a helping hand.

Shane and Kosy rode a mile to the Snow Peak Road. This road was the only paved one in the area. It was built and maintained by the Snow Peak Lumber Company. The Snow Peak

logging trucks used it to deliver large Douglas Fir trees to the lumber mills scattered throughout Linn County.



Every time their paved road crossed a county road the **log trucks** were obligated to stop and give the right-of-way to the public traffic. The general public could use the paved logging road. It was generally understood that the company would not be responsible in any way for accidents caused by trucks or road damage. They even had a disclaimer at each crossing.

Trees of every kind, the majority being evergreen type, lined both sides of the road beginning at Rutherford's Corner. The trees grew so close together, direct sunlight seldom hit this section; therefore the pavement was usually damp until midday, with a lot of moss growing on the shoulders.

About half way to the bridge, Shane took Kosy over to the side of a steep cliff. "This is the Deep Hole. The water is probably about fifteen feet deep. Some brave people dive from up here, but most are not that courageous. The timid ones dive from that lower rock about eight feet above the water."

"I'm certainly not diving from up here," Kosy promised. "Why

it must be at least 40 feet to the water."

The twosome were bouncing down the road when Kosy spotted two other riders watering their horses by the river bed. Kosy pointed to them. "Hey, that's Marty and Erin. Wouldn't you like to get to know her better?" They continued to bounce over to the Lynches. A swift jerk of her head made Erin's ponytail go flying. The twirling red hair finally wrapped around her neck. "Well, if it isn't the California Sunshine Kids. The way you're riding that poor worn out horse you won't be able to sit down for a week."

Shane tried to look indignant, but he knew his backside hurt more than his feelings. "I know a little about horses, but actually I could use some riding tips. Do you give lessons, Cowgirl?"

Erin was a bit taken back by the answer. Her nervousness was evident by the rapid twisting of her pigtail around her index finger. "Well, if....if you don't get better, you'll have to have chiropractic sessions. How much do you know about this area? Have you ever lived here? Is this a good swimming hole? Do you hunt and fish much?"

To Shane and Kosy her rapid-fire questions only confirmed her awkwardness. Shane was glad to be the teacher, at least for now. "I have lived off and on at my grandpa's farm, so, I do know this area fairly well. That gate is the entrance to the Snow Peak Wilderness and this is Snow Peak Road."

"Were you and Kosy going swimming here today?" Marty

asked hopefully.



THE GATE AT THE SNOW PEAK BRIDGE. IT IS THE ENTRANCE INTO THE SNOW PEAK LOGGING COMPANY WILDERNESS. IT IS ALMOST ALWAYS WET AS OREGON HAS A LOT OF RAINFALL. TIFFANY AND TIAGO, MY GRANDCHILDREN, ARE STANDING ON THE SNOW PEAK BRIDGE IN 2014, WHEN I TOOK THEM FOR A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE, VISITING THE PLACES I GREW UP AT, INCLUDING GRANDPA'S FARM.

"Yes, we were," Shane affirmed. "This area is called the channels because of the smooth tunnels the water has carved in the rocks. I've done a lot of fishing and hunting here. We ride often in the hills, but not always on horses. Usually we ride in jeeps. Although we are not real cowboys, we try hard."

Marty smiled at Shane's statement. "Actually western Oregon is not really cowboy country, is it?"

"West of the Cascades, where most of the rain falls, is great farming land. Lebanon is the strawberry capital of the world." Shane was still giving free geography lessons to the Lynches.

"To really see some cowboys you have to meander over to eastern Oregon. They even have a nationally known rodeo at Pendleton."

"Yeah, we've heard of it," Marty responded. "It is called the Pendleton Roundup. Some of our friends compete there. So, to see some real buckeroos we'll have to cross the mountains."

Shane turned toward the gate. "Let's go up the road a piece to Digangi's Lake and I will show you one of my favorite swimming places."

The foursome advanced toward the open gate. Shane was considering how to make friends with Erin, therefore, at first, he didn't notice that the gate chain had been cut. "This gate is usually closed on Sundays. I am not sure why it is thrown wide open now."

Marty eyed the post. "Look, someone has cut this chain that locks the gate. They would have to have a **seriously heavy-duty lock cutter** to do this job!"



"I know the gate is open six days a week," Shane pondered, "But it is always locked on . . ."

He didn't get to finish his sentence before he heard a car come squealing around the bend and tearing straight for them. The driver saw the horses in the middle of the bridge, but he only sped up his attack.

Marty could hardly believe it. "Get off the bridge or he will hit us!" There was a mad dash for the other end of the bridge. Marty and Erin, better at horsemanship, cleared the bridge. Old Red wasn't quite so agile. He was brushed by the car as it flew by.

The horse lost his footing when the car hit his side. He first teetered, and then stumbled. His right back leg collapsed, and with the weight of both kids he fell on his right side. Shane was propelled to the ground with Kosy sprawled all over him. He tried to get up. "Are you okay, Little Sister?"

"Yeah," Kosy answered weakly. "How about you and Old Red?"

The seedy veteran of many falls was the first to regain his footing. Shane examined him thoroughly. He had a nasty scratch across his right hip. Marty had dismounted and was helping Shane give Old Red a once over. "I didn't get their license. I was so wound up."

Erin was helping Kosy brush off the dust and straighten out her hair. "What is going on here? Those guys could have killed us."

Shane led Old Red off the road. "That was close. The car was a black 1955 Chevy Bel Air with a V-8 engine. I'll know the car if I ever see it again."



Erin looked surprised.

"How can you possibly know all that?"

"I have made it my hobby to know cars," Shane bragged. "The models are quite different. I know it was a V-8, because from that corner to here no six cylinder could pick up that kind of speed. He must have been doing eighty when he crossed the bridge."

Marty was not convinced that Shane could identify the car again. "I don't understand, Shane. Since we didn't get the license, we won't be able to recognize it. There must be a lot of black '55 Chevys around."

"That is true my friend," Shane agreed. "But we should know this car. The chrome strip was missing on the driver's side, and somewhere around the tail light they have to have some horse hair from Old Red, because he is missing some."

Erin just shook her head. "This sounds like a detective story."

"My favorite series on television is Perry Mason," Shane commented as he was stroking Old Red close to his new wound.

"I learned a lot about observation and investigation by watching The Master of the courtroom. Reading Sherlock Holmes helps too."

"Okay, you have convinced me," Marty marveled. "But that was too close for comfort. They could have killed us. Dying is scary enough, even when you know for sure where you are going when you die."

Shane was shaking his head now. "How can anyone know for sure where he is going before he dies?" His curiosity was peaked but he did not really want to get another sermon today, he had already sat through one.

"Weren't you listening in church, Shane," Erin started to witness. "Pastor Ballentine made it very clear. If anyone has Jesus Christ as his Savior he has ETERNAL LIFE. Therefore, a Christian KNOWS where he is going when he dies. He will pass forever through **the Pearly Gates**, how wonderful to know this!"



The California transplant was too embarrassed to look Erin right in the eye. He just mumbled as he moved towards the creek. "I guess I should pay more attention in church."

Erin gathered the horses at the side of the river where the

channels carried fresh water to the mills down stream. "What is going on, Shane? Do you know something we don't?"

"Well, my grandfather explained a few things to me," he started. "Those guys must be the ones who are stealing tools and dynamite from the Snow Peak Lumber Company. A family friend died last week trying to stop them. They killed him in his pickup about six miles up this road."

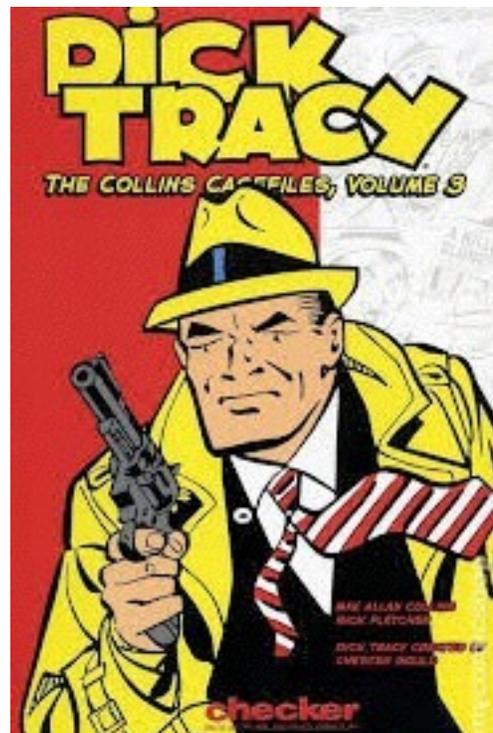
Erin raised her eyebrows. "Do you think so! We heard about that. That's terrible. What do they want dynamite for? It certainly must be important to them, if they are willing to kill someone for it."

Shane sat on a rock slab and began skipping stones across the creek. "You can't buy dynamite without a permit, unless you are a contractor or work for a lumber company. So, if you want dynamite for some illegal reason, you have to steal it."

"That still does not answer my question, Shane," Erin insisted. "Why would they want dynamite so badly that they would kill for it?"

"Do I look like **Dick Tracy** or Perry Mason? What could they want it for? I have no idea. Let's go swimming."

From the Snow Peak Bridge to



the big hole existed some of the best fishing in the area. The water was good for swimming too. The rapids have rolled over the flat rock slabs for thousands of years, carving channels with smooth sides.

The water comes directly from the mountains and has no pollution whatsoever. While standing in a channel with water up to his shoulders, Shane could see some **rainbow trout** whisk by, if he looked quickly.



The trout's upper side color is almost the same as the bottom of the river, but when they go after insects or each other. It is their silver/rainbow sides that reflect the sunlight enough to spot them.

Shane was pointing to the bottom of the channel. "If you stand still long enough the minnows begin to nibble at your toes.

Crabtree Creek is stocked with rainbow trout by the Roaring River Fish Hatchery, which is located about five miles from Erin's house. I'll take you there some day."

Marty dove, trying to catch a crayfish. He came up empty handed. "When are you going to take us fishing, Shane?"

Erin was sitting under a giant Maple tree, whose large dinner-

plate leaves shaded her from the blazing sun. "What do you mean 'us,' Marty Lynch? Do you have a mouse in your pocket? I'm not going fishing. And I'm certainly not putting a slimy, wiggly worm on a sharp hook, waiting for some scaly, smelly fish to be caught, so I have to take him home and clean him."

Kosy was surprised. "Really, Erin, didn't you ever go fishing in Montana?"

Erin was adamant now. "Not me, the only fish I'll eat is in a tuna salad."

Kosy was trying to sting Erin. "Well, if you want to be a really successful fisherman you have to keep the worms warm and content."

"Not that I am a bit interested," Erin groaned, "But how do you do that?"

Looking closely to note Erin's reaction, Kosy finished her fishing lesson. "My brother keeps them in his mouth!"



**LOG BRIDGE LIKE THE
ONE GOING TO
GRANDPA'S FARM OVER
CRABTREE CREEK**

CHAPTER SEVEN

A SAFEWAY CHASE

It is not easy for children to grow up with one parent, it is even harder when that one is an alcoholic. Many times the Woods children were left in boarding homes as their mom went on a prolonged drinking spree. This experience left bad memories of mistreatment, poor food, and no roots whatsoever.

Thomas, now seventeen, was on his own. He seemed to have survived it all better than Shane, and much better than Kosy. Shane could remember Kosette crying herself to sleep in a different boarding home every month or so. He always tried to comfort her but had very little success. It usually took Thomas to do this mother's job.

These scenes haunted Shane and gave him little reason to believe there was a God who loved him. His grandparents, recently saved, were praying fervently for the salvation of these grandchildren. Grandpa and Grandma Woods knew that God was going to have to demonstrate His love for them in some very special ways. They were anxious to see how He would do it.

God had already protected the kids from sure disaster when Orian stopped them from driving onto a blown out bridge and now again He had kept them safe from the hands of the Snow Peak robbers. Maybe Shane and Kosy would begin to think seriously about their eternal destiny. At least that was what Grandpa was

praying as he doctored Old Red.

The barn door closed behind Grandpa as he handed Shane **the bag balm**. "Just put some on the scratched area. That should do it for Old Red. He has had worse wounds, although I don't think any has been so nearly fatal. Sergeant Kochian is the sheriff of Linn County. He is coming out here to question you kids about the incident."



It was late Sunday night when Sergeant Kochian arrived. "You kids are the first ones to encounter these robbing murderers and live to tell about it. Although, I understand they tried to take you out on the bridge."

Shane instinctively liked Sergeant Kochian. "Yeah, we were lucky I guess. If they are stealing **dynamite**, what do you suppose they want it for?"

Sergeant Kochian continued to write down details. "Stealing dynamite is not a new problem around here. It is obvious that they don't have any legal use in mind. I'm new in this area. I recently transferred from cold



Minneapolis, Minnesota. I have not had a chance to see any dynamite used in an illegal manner. If you kids see anything else suspicious contact me."

Shane had only been at Grandpa's for two days, and it seemed like he was getting involved in more than he could have imagined. Being the only live witness in a murder case was quite exciting, but it could be a little dangerous, too.

Right now Shane had other things occupying his mind, like a petite redhead from Montana. She was certainly a good rider and was helpful in a crisis. But what was she really like? Would he ever get a chance to know her personally?

He had never been in one place long enough to personally know any girls. It was always run-down apartments in low-income districts that had been his fare. His mother had to change jobs often because of her heavy drinking problem.

He had known the inside of many bars, as he and Thomas had to accompany their mother when she could not afford a baby sitter. It was their job to keep Kosy out of her hair as late nights dragged on into early mornings.

Would Erin be interested in someone with his background? She had a solid family, a good home, and a hopeful future. It was nice that she lived close enough to visit. No doubt they would even ride the same school bus.

Now he had to consider what he would do this summer. He had to work to buy school clothes, but no one would hire a 15 year

old. He would have to work in the fields as he did when he lived with Grandpa last time.

Next year he would have his driver's license, and he could get a regular, decent job. All these troubling thoughts occupied his mind as he crashed into bed and dozed off.

"Shane, wake up," Kosy yelled. "Someone from the church is here. They want to talk to us."

Shane dressed hurriedly to join Grandma on the front porch. A middle-aged lady was talking. "I know it will be difficult to provide for the grandkids, so we got together a few boxes of used clothes you might need for both of them."

Kosy caught Shane before he reached the ladies. "Good grief, we have a Good Samaritan bringing some used clothes. They will probably have stains and be thread-bare at the knees. Shane, I am tired of handouts and hand-me-downs from kids much bigger than I am. I just have to have some new clothes for school this fall, or I'M NOT GOING."

Knowing perfectly well why Kosy felt as she did, Shane tried to console her. "Listen, Little Sister, take it easy. If we want some new clothes for school, we both are going to have to work in the fields. Grandpa can't afford to buy our clothes."

"I know you are tired of wearing our worn out boys things. I promise you will have some nice threads to start school in September. Now come on, we have to thank this lady for her kindness or Grandma will be on our case. Try to sound sincere."

Kosy looked stubborn now. "I'm not thanking anyone for old, worn out clothes, and I am not a bit excited about staining my hands picking berries and beans. It is mom's drinking that has brought all of this upon us."

Shane left Kosy fuming to herself. He approached the tall lady who was obviously aging well under a broad-brimmed straw hat. "Well, I certainly would like to thank you Mrs. . . ."

"It's Lillian Payne, and this lady is Irma Werth. You kids are welcome. We are glad you are here. We will continue to pray for you."

Shane brought the box of clothes in while Kosy was still acting like a rebel. "Oh great, now they're praying for us, too. Mrs. Payne. What a funny name. Can you imagine her husband as a dentist? He would be Dr. Payne. No way would I ever go to his office. And Mrs. Werth, I wonder how much she is actually worth?"

Grandma now entered the room and caught Kosy off guard. "A little gratitude never hurt anyone, Kosette." Just then the **phone rang**, and Kosy ran for it. She knew the phone was the only thing that it had saved her from a lecture on manners.

"It's Marty and Erin. They want to know if we would like to



go shopping with them in Lebanon. They have to buy some groceries for the family. Can we go, Grandma?"

"Yes, you can go, and don't worry. I'll remember to finish the lecture on manners later. Also, when you return we have to talk about our plans for the summer."

The ride to Lebanon takes about thirty minutes because of slow going and all the dust one must stir up before he gets to drive on pavement. Erin was the first to play tour guide. "There is the Lebanon Express office, right across from Jost's Funeral Home. Dad is the paper's ad agent and part time photographer. Turn right here, Marty. We are going to **Safeway Foods** on Rose Street."

As they pulled into the parking lot, Shane noticed the big sign: FREE PARKING WHILE SHOPPING AT SAFEWAY. "Wouldn't it be funny if, on Halloween, someone came by and changed two words? It could read: FREE SHOPPING WHILE PARKING AT SAFEWAY."

When Kosy stopped giggling she bumped Shane. "Hey, there is a black car just like the one we saw yesterday."

Everyone's eyes were now fixed on the black '55 Chevy. Marty decided to pull up next to it. "Well, Shane,



this will be our chance to check it out for the recognizable traits. Kosy, you and Erin stand by the store entrance. If ANYONE starts coming out the door, wave at us."

With the girls posted at the door, Marty and Shane felt it was safe enough to examine the car. "Look, Shane, no chrome trim down the driver's side. Hey, take a look at this tail light, too. It is shattered, and the trim is sticking out just a bit. Can you see any horse hairs?"

Just then Kosy started doing jumping jacks on the sidewalk. Marty and Shane double-timed it back to their car, just as an old hunch-backed lady, hobbling on a cane, came out of the store. When she staggered into view, the boys were relieved and disgusted at the same time.

"What are you trying to do? Scare us to death?" Shane yelled at Kosy. "That old lady is no crook. Does she even look a bit dangerous?"

Kosy was indignant. "Well, you said anyone, didn't you?"

"Okay, Okay, next time I will be more specific. Just keep doing your job." By this time Marty had extracted a few red horse hairs from the tail light. He was careful not to take them all. He wrote the license number on his palm - AGB 376.

Shane started waving the girls back to the car. "Let's pull out on the street and wait to see where this car might be going. Since Park Street is a one way, they'll have to turn left. Better yet, let's park the car pointing towards Park, and go into the store to see if

we can recognize anyone." They moved the car onto the street, facing Park.

Erin locked her side of the car as the rest walked toward the store. "Hey, wait up for me. We might as well get the groceries while we're snoopy around in the store."



Marty and Kosy headed for the meat department, investigating everyone in the store. Erin and Shane crossed over to the fruit section. The store was fairly empty. There were three **boy scouts** looking at kites, and an elderly couple putting canned goods into a cart.

Marty stared at the dairy section as Shane rounded the corner by the stacks of shortcake. "Shane, those two are the only likely suspects," he whispered, pointing to the two ragged-looking men at the end of the row.

Shane saw the two burly men in Levi jackets. They had their pants tucked into their cowboy boots. One was portly and short, while the other bearded one, with the quart of milk under his arm, was taller. Suddenly they turned and started coming closer.

As the taller man came nearer, he leaned over and growled to his shorter friend: "Hey, dose are da brats we saw at da bridge

yesterday, and don't day seem to be gawking at us."

The big guy was obviously the boss. He pointed towards Shane and Erin. "Hey, you brats, we want to talk to you." The men picked up their pace and headed straight for the kids.



Marty swooped his arm through the tower of **Hormel Spam** and sent the cans bouncing all over the aisle. Shane grabbed Kosy and Erin, making tracks for the front door. He hit the door running and held it open for the others. "Follow me. I know where to hide."

The Snow Peak robbers hit the cans of spam. Their legs went south as their torsos went north. It took them a few minutes to correct themselves. Once they did, they were hot on the trail again.

The kids ran down the alley. Shane motioned for them to duck behind the bushes between the church and the clinic. "We can hide here until they get tired of looking for us."

The Crabtree Creek gang didn't have to wait long. Before the bushes could even stop shaking the gruesome twosome busted around the corner. They didn't look a bit friendly.

The two winded pursuers stopped right in front of the frightened foursome. The crooks were frantically looking every which way. "We lost dem Bucky, let's split and round up da uthers."

Without returning to the store, the men climbed into the Chevy and tore out of the parking lot. The kids had calculated correctly. Marty's car was in a perfect position to follow them.

Although the Lacombe detectives ran full speed for their car, they still allowed the crooks a few blocks head start. The pursuit began. Marty followed them to the junior high where they turned left and passed the public swimming pool, before turning onto Tangent Street.



Feeling a bit like "Gang Busters" Marty followed at a distance. **"My heart is pounding faster than a humming bird's.** If I could get to a phone, I would call for help. We can't really do anything. These guys are dangerous and could play very rough."

Shane also felt nervous. "The chase out of Safeway's was too close for comfort. Let's just keep them in sight and find out where they go. Then we can notify Sergeant Kochian. You girls

get down in the back so they won't see four people. They don't know what kind of car we have."

Marty held the Pontiac two blocks behind the crooks. "These guys know us by sight. That is a bit scary. We don't want them to see us now. I don't think I have the ability to out maneuver or out run them. Look, Shane. They're turning left."

"Slow down, real slow, Marty," Shane ordered. "Give them all the space you can. They just turned down a dead end street that is only one block long."

Erin was baffled again. "How can you possibly know that?"

"When I was in the seventh grade I lived on Rose Street by the railroad tracks. I know this section like the back



of my hand because **I had a paper route in this area.**"

"Now that we can see they left the car and entered the last house on the left, what can we possibly do? Marty obeyed Shane's orders and stopped the car at the entrance of the street.

As they sat there on the dark side of the street, Shane noticed a vibration in the car. At first he just shrugged it off, but it got more rapid and forceful. Finally he curled up his nose and started looking around. "Who is the human vibrator?"

Erin started to snicker and then burst out laughing. "It's

Marty, Shane. It's my nervous brother Marty. He is always bouncing his knee or strumming his fingers when he's nervous. And I guess we all have a reason to be nervous."

Marty curled up his lip and defended himself. "Nobody's perfect now are they? If you look quickly, Shane, you will probably catch Erin twirling her blazing hair with her index finger."

Shane looked back, but not in time. Erin had already stopped and was peeking over the front seat. Their foreheads almost collided. Erin jerked back and blurted out. "I think we should do as Shane suggested and get Sergeant Kochian. These guys are not **the Bowery Boys**, you know. They scare me. Besides that, Kosy's back here having lunch with her fingernails."

The kids waited fifteen minutes more. Nothing seemed to be happening, so they drove to the police station. It was a small two

**A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN
IN THE BOWERY OF NEW
YORK WHO WORKED
TOGETHER AND HUNG
OUT TOGETHER
EXPERIENCING
ADVENTURES. IT WAS A
COMEDY ACT.**



story building with a sign over the door: **LEBANON POLICE & LINN COUNTY SHERIFF**. Shane opened the door for Erin, and the rest followed her into the reception area. Everyone noticed the slogan on the wall: **TO SERVE & TO PROTECT**.



Marty addressed the officer who was operating the radio. "We would like to talk to Sergeant Kochian."

A tall man, who had been **attending the switchboard**, stood up to greet them. He had a mustache and goatee. By his face and horn-rimmed glasses he looked like he should be teaching philosophy at Oregon State.

Shane repeated Marty's request, "We need to talk to Sergeant Kochian please."

"I am Officer Austin. Sergeant Kochian is not available right now. Can I help you?"



Marty would rather have talked to Sergeant Kochian. "Is there any way we can get in touch with him?"

The young officer was becoming annoyed. "Why does it have to be him? We are all trained to serve and protect."

Shane explained the chase and their pursuit of the crooks, describing the seriousness of the situation. "Sergeant Kochian told us to contact him if we found anything concrete."

"What is this group?" the officer teased in a friendly voice. "Do you think you are junior detectives or **the Hardy Boys**, and girls of course? Seriously, I do not know where the sergeant is. I could . . ."

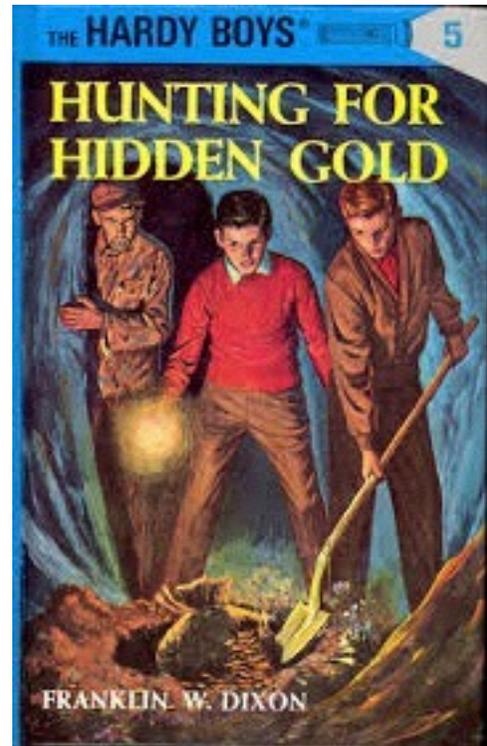
Just then the radio screeched out with the familiar voice of Sergeant Kochian: "Officer Austin, what message do you have for me?"

The officer took the mike. "Your wife wants you to bring home some pepperoni for pizza tonight. Don't hang up, I have another message. Do you know four kids with information about the Snow Peak robbers?"

The radio squeaked and cracked. "I sure do. If Shane is there, give him the mike."

Shane gladly took the mike and explained the situation. "What do you want us to do, Sergeant?"

Sergeant Kochian moved quickly. "Officer Austin, take Shane and Marty in the squad car and meet me out on Tangent Street. Don't let any grass grow under your feet. Leave the girls at the



station. And no sirens!"

The young officer soon changed his attitude, and under orders, took off for the rendezvous. The girls complained heartily about being left behind.

On the way to Tangent Street, Officer Austin noticed other police cars joining the pack. "The sergeant must have really believed you. He has called all the cars to meet us."

As the trio met Sergeant Kochian, Shane pointed out the direction. The squad cars pulled onto the street without using their lights or sirens. They didn't want to warn the crooks. Marty was the first to notice that the car was gone. The well-armed officers went quickly through the house. It was empty. "We've lost them again."

CHAPTER EIGHT

A FISHING LESSON

Grandma turned from the stove and faced Shane and Kosy. "You will have to come with me to the **strawberry fields** and work. I am the row boss every day, so you will always have a ride with me. We are going to be picking at



Brownie Mitchell's Strawberry Farm. Your cousins from Albany will also be there. Shane, you have to earn enough to finish paying off your car."

Shane had already been calculating this deal in his head. He thought he had a better idea than Grandma did. "I don't think I am going to pay them off. It is only a small amount, \$150.00, and I know they are not going to come after me in another state for this miserable amount." He was sure this teenage logic would convince Grandpa.

Jack Woods put his rough lumberjack hands on Shane's short, young shoulders and looked right in his eyes. "My dear grandson, you **WILL** pay this debt off. It is the right thing to do. Besides that, if you don't, every time a policeman comes across

your path you will think he is after you. A guilty conscience is a heavy load to carry on such small shoulders.”



In his heart, he knew he was not making the right decision, but he did

not want to work in the fields just to pay the car off. He continued to look at his Grandfather and gave him some comfort. “Okay Grandpa, I understand. I will pay it back just as you asked.”

“By the way, Grandma,” Shane said as he moved towards the sink. “What are these three-by-five cards doing on the window above the sink? Each one has something written on it.”

Julia was more than glad to answer Shane's question. “Since I accepted Christ, the Bible has become a living book to me. If I am going to imitate my Savior, I need to know what He said. Both Grandpa and I are trying to memorize at least one Bible verse a week.”

Both kids looked at each other and made some strange, jerking movements with their eyes. Kosy actually rolled her eyes, but grandma didn't see it. Then the rebellious granddaughter stood up to leave the kitchen. “That's good, Grandma. A little religion never hurt anyone, right, Shane?”

Shane could not deny what Kosy was saying. What he knew

about religion could be written with capital letters on his thumb nail. He appreciated, and loved his grandmother, but this new style of living might mess up his plans for teenage fun. He decided to keep mum about the subject for the time being. "We'll be ready to pick berries, Grandma. You can count on us to help with our living expenses."

Grandma was not a bit amused by either of their attitudes. "KOSY, YOU JUST SIT RIGHT BACK DOWN. And don't you move either, Shane. Both of you know how hard our life was when you were here last time. Grandpa used to get off work Friday night and then stop by at the bar to have a drink or two with his buddies. He would usually get out of the car and stagger into the house. BOTH OF YOU KNOW THAT WAS GOING ON FOR YEARS - NOW DON'T YOU?"

Both of them were nodding affirmatively. They knew their grandmother well, and now was the time to shut up and listen. Kosy was not only listening, she was wide-eyed. Shane had warned her about getting Grandma rilled up, DON'T DO IT, HE SAID, NOT EVEN ONCE.

Grandma continued her mini sermon. "I prayed for years that John would quit drinking, but nothing worked. Then I accepted Christ and my prayers finally got passed the ceiling. Grandpa finally went to church with me. When Pastor Ballentine preached on 'Ye Must Be Born Again,' Grandpa almost ran down the aisle. At first he did not say much. I knew if he came staggering home

on Friday, he really didn't mean it on Sunday."

At this point Julia paused to wipe the tears from her eyes. They reflected the change in her heart. Neither Shane or Kosy had ever seen her this emotional. They did not interrupt her. They were touched by her sincerity. Tears were unashamedly streaming down her cheeks. She did not even bother to wipe them now. "On Friday night I stood by the window for over an hour, waiting for John to park the car and come in. Finally he arrived. My heart was in my throat. I prayed desperately that there would be a change in his life because of Christ.

When he stepped out of the car and moved toward the house, he was walking as straight as a soldier. I got so excited, I ran out of the house and hugged him. He was shocked. That is the difference between religion and having Christ."

"Now you two can think what you want. Grandpa has not had a drink since that day and I am eternally thankful. You may not agree with our decisions, but you cannot refute the evidence you see in our lives." With that Julia put her hands in her lap and said a silent prayer that these kids would not reject her testimony.

Grandma had made her point. The kids knew the terrible effects of alcohol on their family. They had relatives in prison because of drink. Even their mom had spent three years in prison for robbing a liquor store. They didn't have any more smart remarks to give. Kosy had just been born and that required their move to Grandpa's farm for the first time.

On the way to Mitchell's Berry Farm, Kosy confided with Shane. "I don't want to pick strawberries. That kind of hard labor is only for migrant workers."

"Now wait a minute, Kosy," Shane addressed his sister in a low tone. "We need the money, and there is no other way to get it right now. Our cousin Larry will be there picking strawberries, and he has polio. He doesn't have to pick berries. So quit complaining."

Kosy was not convinced she wanted to pick berries. "Perhaps it would be better to have polio!" She was not a bit happy about their plans to get their fingers dirty and their knees sore, wearing out their ragged jeans, picking strawberries.

The morning sky looked as wild as a Canadian honker. Dark grey clouds were stacking up on the Coast Range, pushing cool air towards Lebanon. "Do you think we will be able to work today Grandma? It looks like a storm is brewing."

"You're right, we won't pick berries if it rains. You can be thankful that those clouds are covering up the blazing sun, or you might just melt today."

They pulled into the parking lot and Kosy groaned as she quickly surveyed **one hundred**



acres of strawberries. At the far end of the patch irrigation water was splattering the uniform rows of plants. The sun, peeking through between a few clouds too stubborn to close up, hit the spray and made some rainbows crisscross the sky.



Early bird pickers were already breaking their backs over ankle high strawberry plants. The laborers were **filling crates with large, red-ripe berries.** The majority of the pickers were young kids. Oregon's fruit and vegetable harvest depended on teen labor. Mothers who needed extra funds were there, as well as some workaholics who just got off the graveyard shift at the plywood mills. Many retired people could fill out their monthly check by bending over these strawberry rows.

Grandma's job was to check the rows already picked. If there were too many ripe ones left behind, she would find the pickers assigned to that row and make them pick it over. The loss was not tolerated.

Her favorite slogan was: "It's easier to do it right than to do it twice." Although Shane and Kosy would never call her **"Old Hawk Eye,"** that was her nick name.

Shane was the first to recognize his cousins. Larry, the Albany high school chess champion, had taught Shane the game's strategy. Shane especially liked the fool's checkmate. He could handily beat any inexperienced opponent quickly if each person made the right three moves.



Shane shook Larry's hand firmly. "Hey, cousin, I haven't seen you in years. Do you notice how Kosy has grown up into a regular lady?"



Larry leaned on his crutches. He had contacted polio one year before the Salk vaccine was discovered. "If it isn't my favorite chess partner. Have you ever gotten past three moves?"

Shane smiled wildly. "All right, no fair teasing cousins. How do YOU pick

MY COUSIN LARRY. HE WAS AN INSPIRATION TO ALL OF US. HE WORKED HARD AND NEVER STOPPED SMILING. HE PICKED STRAWBERRIES AND I PICKED THEM, TOO - RIGHT BESIDE HIM.

strawberries, Larry?"

"If you help me lower down, I'll show you," Larry promised. Shane helped Larry lower his frame between two rows as he laid his crutches aside. "I take two rows and pull the crates along with me on the far side of each row as I pull myself between the rows. Then my brother turns in the crates and helps me move to another area."

A hunch-backed, middle-aged man stopped to survey the situation. He was obviously picking berries to supplement his retirement check. "Let me tell you something, Sonny. I really admire you for working under those conditions. I know some people who have two good legs and are home on welfare, drinking beer, and complaining all the time."

Kosy looked at Shane a little sheepish. She was only eleven years old but she had two good legs. Her cousin had no means of walking but was happy to earn some money, even if it did mean wearing out his Levis. "I guess I can try. Maybe it won't be all that awful."

Shane reached down and brushed back a plant as he swooped up a huge ripe strawberry about the size of a baseball. "If you are lucky enough to find one this size, you can make



your taste buds stand up at attention." With that challenge, he popped it into his mouth and grinned like a Cheshire cat.

As the day wore on, Kosy managed to pick four crates before lunch. "That's about two dollars, right, Shane?"

"You did well, kid, and I'm proud of my little buckeroo," Shane bragged with his best **John Wayne** imitation.

They were just sitting down in the shade to eat lunch when Larry came hobbling over. "You sure have grown up, Kosy. Why the last time I noticed, **you were only knee high to a grasshopper.** I do believe you take after your mother."



She just smiled and thought to herself, "Thanks a lot, Larry. That is no compliment. I'd like to take after my mom with a three foot willow stick. If I would have had decent parents, I would have a choice about being here picking berries in the hot sun. But she kept



her feelings to herself and just smiled at her favorite cousin.

Kosy's feelings against her mother were strong. She wouldn't voice her opinion now, but that didn't stop her from having one. "Being rejected is hard to take, especially when it was a daily experience." Kosy kept all these thoughts hidden in the hallow parts of her heart that had been created by the callous actions of her mother.

As a child she had learned a ditty: "Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me." That was certainly corny. NAMES DO HURT! They wound worse than stones. Being called stupid was unfair. She was just as smart as the next kid.

All of her hurts clouded her heart again. Why did Mom leave us? Where is she now? What about this God that was supposed to love me? If he really cared for me, why did He allow these things to happen to me? Is He punishing me for some past sin?

The longer she pondered the situation, the madder she got. She hated her mother for the cruel things that she had done to all three of them. If she would have been around and a decent mother, Kosy believed she would not have to be out here breaking her young back over these "stupid" rows of strawberries..

Shane noticed Kosy was getting upset. "Hey Sis, are you going to eat that peanut butter and jelly sandwich or strangle it?"

The week rolled by. Kosy managed to earn good money in the strawberry harvest, in spite of the fact that she despised the work. On Monday evening she asked to be dropped off at Erin's

house on the way home. For some mysterious, unknown reason Shane decided to join her.

"We'll be home in time to do all of the chores, Grandma," they promised.

Marty answered the door. "Hi, Shane. Are you here to see me or my cute sister?" Marty was always joking around, Erin had told them that. He also was the nervous one, with his knee thumping the floor, shaking the timbers.

Shane was caught off guard. "Well, I really came to talk to both of you. The Strawberry Fair is coming up in a few weeks. I wanted to invite Erin, and you too, of course, to go with Kosy and me. We'll need some transportation. Do you want to go?"

"I'd like to go, but I can't speak for Erin." He shouted down the hallway. "Erin, come out here. We have visitors."

"This part of Oregon is the world's largest producer of strawberries," Shane started mustering up his tour guide voice again. "Every year Lebanon hosts a fair. You know, the normal rides that tear out your guts. They also have the world's largest strawberry shortcake. It is so big they have to pull it with a tractor."

Kosy wanted to share in the fun. "We can even give you all the ingredients if you want. Let's see, there are four hundred pounds of flour...."

"You can spare us the details, Kosy," Marty insisted kindly. "And what do they do with all this shortcake?"

Shane's eyes bugged out. "They give it away, all of it. Each person gets as much as he can eat, if he wants to continue getting in line."

"Wow, my mouth is watering already! What do you think, Erin? Should we honor these pilgrims with our presence?"

Erin smiled at Shane and hugged Kosy. "I'd love to go. I think we had better take our rides before we eat any of that shortcake."

Shane changed the subject. "I was talking to Sergeant Kochian. Did you know that there is a \$5,000 reward for the capture of any or all of that gang? They are especially interested in recovering the gun that killed our friend Jeff."

"That is a little out of our league, isn't it?" Erin commented as she and Kosy headed for the kitchen to get a coke.

Now that the girls were gone, Shane focused on Marty. "I think they will try again. Did you know that the Snow Peak Road curves close to our house. I can see all the traffic that passes. If they happen to come by again, maybe I will be lucky enough to spot them."

Marty was beginning to know Shane a bit more. "Why are you stroking your chin? I get the feeling you are planning an new adventure. What do you have in mind? What can we do? I am definitely not interested in getting shot, or chased off the road again."

Shane was confident. "I have a few ideas that should be safe enough."

"Okay, but now let's join the girls for something cold. By the way, since you won't be working tomorrow, why don't you take us fishing? Maybe I can even convince Erin to go, if you don't mention anything about worms."

The following afternoon Marty and Erin arrived at the farm leading two other horses. Erin dismounted. "It sure beats walking."

Shane grabbed the reins of the two spare horses. "I'm really glad you brought these extra horses along, Old Red is not healed up yet. You're still owing me some riding lessons to save my backside aren't you, Erin? Remember, you promised."

Erin searched her memory for any such promise she might have made during a weak moment. "Did I really say that? Well, no matter what, you really do need the lessons."

"The first lesson is in mounting. Are you ready?" Marty asked with a malicious grin on his so innocent face. "Stand back about twenty feet, take off full speed ahead, place your palms on the horse's backside, and leapfrog into the saddle. You know, like the Lone Ranger does."

Shane was no fool. "Your just trying to make a big fool out of a little one, aren't you, now? Sure, and I suppose this horse is Silver, or maybe Scout."

"Not exactly," Marty said, slapping the neck of the mare. "Are you color blind Shane? This horse is not silver, it's gray. We brought this one for you to ride. Her name is "Old Bucker",

appropriately of course."

Shane hurried over, mounting on Marty's horse. "Very funny, you take Old Bucker there and I will stick with Molasses."

Winding through the evergreens Shane led them past Stimpson's Creek, which actually was nothing but a stream. They hoofed up to the middle of Hern's Bridge. Looking straight down they could see the river bottom, through about eight feet of crystal clear water. There were thirty, or so huge fish swaying back and forth in the deep.

Marty got so excited he almost fell off his horse. Even Erin was amazed at the sight. She dismounted and started to grab a pole. "I think I could snag, one of them, even without any ugly worms on my hook."

"You're probably right," Shane snickered, "But you would not want to eat them. They are suckers, a fish that feeds off the garbage on the bottom. They would be equivalent to a river buzzard."

Erin handed the pole back to Shane. "What is this Fishing Information 101? I recently changed my mind. Maybe I'll just sit on the bridge and throw rocks at those ugly river buzzards."

"We are after rainbow trout, not suckers. Do you see those rapids down there?" Shane pointed down stream. "That is one of the best places we have found. We can sit on the bridge and cast from here letting the stream do the work for us."

Erin helped Kosy dismount. "I already told you, Shane, I'm

not playing with any slimy worms."

"My dear friend," Shane surprised even himself with this quick familiarity. "I took all that into consideration. I brought along some Red Devil spinners for you to use. If you catch a wiggly old trout, I will take it off the hook for you. Agreed?"

Erin was not entirely convinced. "I'll try, but if I get my hands smelly, you're in trouble."

Shane opened the tackle box displaying a varied assortment of Red Devil spinners. Marty was threading his hook with a worm that was protesting vigorously. "Look at this little bugger wiggle."

"Where did you get all of those spinners?" Erin asked as she peeked her nose into the tackle box. "Just exactly how do they work?"

Shane picked out a small spinner and made a knot on Erin's line. "I could never afford all these spinners. Rich businessmen come out here to fish. They use these famous spinners. I guess they don't like to play with worms either." He smiled crookedly at Erin. With the Red Devil on, Shane cast Erin's line towards the rapids. "Now just hold on and reel it in very slowly. The rapids will keep it from snagging on the rocks."

Shane then proceeded to fix Kosy's line. "That's how I get the spinners. The city slickers really don't know how to fish. They cast into the rapids, snagging their spinners in the rocks. They think there is a huge monster on the line, so they jerk it. The line usually ends up breaking."

"Now and then I go swimming around those rocks. I find the lines and just follow them to the spinners, and pronto, I have enough for my friends and me."

Just then Erin's pole bent over double!

CHAPTER NINE

WRESTLING INTRODUCTION

"You should have seen her face, Mr. Lynch," Shane explained as they sat in the grassy area, enjoying the shade of a huge weeping willow. "I don't know if she was scared or excited, perhaps it was both. She just threw the whole pole in the water."

Marty joined in the fun. "She must have hooked a big one. At least a two-pounder."

Shane noticed Erin coming within ear shot, so he thought he would continue the ribbing. "It was a good thing I had my swimming trunks on under my jeans. I had to retrieve Grandpa's rod and reel."

"That's not fair, Shane," Erin protested vigorously. "I teach you how to ride a horse without making fun of you."

"You haven't taught me anything yet," Shane complained. "And I have no certainty that you will, without teasing me. One thing for sure, I would never get so frustrated that I would throw Old Bucker in the river and make you retrieve her."

Erin commenced to smile and ended up laughing. "Shane, your humor is really something. Who exactly are you anyway?" She had been informed on Shane and Kosy's background including the episodes of abandonment and the scary ride to Lacombe, with a week's detour in the Medford detention center. She admired Shane for his ability to bounce back so quickly.

Shane was beginning to like this Montana cowgirl. She was sincere and very transparent. "Well, considering all the crummy years I have had, rejection, and the hard times, I try to live on the lighter side of life."

"I try to see humor in all I do, even laughing at myself. If I am eventually going to laugh at what I am presently passing through why not laugh now, too? It makes life much more enjoyable. It's either laugh or cry. It's either enjoy life or get a bleeding ulcer."

Mr. Lynch was amused by it all, but since he had to live with Erin, he decided to leave the teasing to the boys. He sat his lemonade on the arm of his lawn chair. "Go ahead, Marty, now is the time to open the subject with Shane."

Marty liked Shane. He had hopes of gendering a good friendship. "Do you like sports, Shane?"

"Oh yeah, I like almost all sports, except ice hockey. I think it's definitely too brutal. I can't imagine participating in a sport where they start knocking each other's teeth out before the national anthem is sung."

"I like football too, but baseball is my favorite, and Willie Mays is my kind of player. He can do anything. I lived only one hundred miles north of San Francisco. That's how I became an avid fan of the Giants and the 'Say Hey' boy of baseball."

Marty got excited now. "Well, that puts us a little at odds. Our favorite American League team is the Yankees. I really like Mickey Mantle. Besides that, I have an uncle who works for the

L.A. Dodgers. We definitely are not San Francisco Giant fans."

Shane slowly raised his eyebrows. "I see we are going to have a lot of fun times. I have even played little league for a few years, although I never stayed in one place long enough to get established as a regular. I am not as good as I'd like to be."

"Marty has one other interest," Mr Lynch added. " Maybe you could even call it a passion - wrestling."

"Wrestling. You can't really be serious," Shane laughed. "You mean that garbage they have on T.V. every Saturday night, with Gorgeous George and Boom Boom Mahulick?"

Now it was time for Marty and Mr. Lynch to laugh at Shane. "Not WRASTLING, Shane, WRESTLING, the AAU kind. You know, like in the Olympics," Marty explained.

"No, I don't have the faintest idea what you are talking about."

Marty thought it would be Wrestling 101 with Shane, be he didn't care. He motioned for Shane to follow him. They turned the corner of the house, and Shane ducked through a short door entering into a room covered wall-to-wall with wrestling mats. The walls even had padding and the roof was only eight feet high. There was a hole in the ceiling at the far end of the forty by forty foot room.

Marty pointed to the hole. "That is where the heat comes into the room. We pump moisture in during the dry weather. In the winter it is hot and humid in here, but of course we control it as we desire."

"This is amazing," Shane marveled. "What is all this for? And look at this nice, soft mat." He jumped up and down, feeling the cushion under his feet.

Marty was quick to respond. "Please, Shane, one rule is to never walk on the mat with street shoes. We have special wrestling shoes to use on this mat. It cost my dad over \$5,000. But he thought the investment was worthwhile."

Shane pondered in his heart what it would have been like to have to have a dad and mom that cared so much for they would buy a \$5,000 piece of sporting equipment for his personal use? How much different his life would have been.

Shane was baffled at all of this. "Your dad must really love you to spend all that for your benefit. Is wrestling really that important to you?"

"Look at me, Shane," Marty pointed at his chest. "I am five feet six inches and weigh one hundred sixty pounds. Do I look like someone who can slam dunk a basketball or survive a hit from a three hundred pound defensive line backer? Wrestling is my sport."

"Wrestling is no doubt the world's greatest sport, and one of the oldest," Marty continued. "Only three sports are mentioned in the Bible: wrestling, boxing and running."

"A football player is large and tough, but he only works hard for about five to seven minutes of an hour game. The rest of the time he is just standing around, planning strategy or resting on the

sidelines. I remember one humongous defensive end that came out for wrestling practice just one night, and quit. He said it was too taxing on his body, too strenuous to make it worthwhile."

"Be careful what you say, Marty," Shane tried to look scared. "Even the walls have ears. Maybe some galloping ghost will get even with you."

Marty was tickled, but he was trying to be convincing. "Seriously Shane, a wrestler matched against someone his own weight works hard for six minutes without a break. That's tough. He is pushing his equal weight around on the mat, using every available muscle."

"Even though your team loses the meet, you can still win your match. You can even be part of a weak team and still personally win the state championship," Marty finished his lesson.

Shane thought Marty's enthusiasm was great, perhaps even contagious. "Now you are starting to interest me. I am only five feet four inches short. Soaking wet, with rocks in my pockets, I might tip the scales at one hundred fifty pounds."

"I like football," Shane noted. "But I am not going to be a target for some sod-busting farmer boy who likes to win trophies. Does Lebanon High have a wrastling, .. I mean wrestling team?"

Marty appreciated Shane's interest. "I hear they have a fairly good team. They took third in the state last year, with one state champion at weight 148."

"I have a problem. Maybe you could help me," Marty started



the closing lines of his sales pitch. "As you probably already know, one cannot wrestle by himself. If you could get interested enough, we could practice together."

Shane was excited now. "I think I would like to try it.

You would have to teach me what you know. I mean, it would be like starting from scratch with me. I do not have any of those special shoes either."

"You give me a warm body to throw around this room, and I will donate **an old pair of wrestling shoes**," Marty promised.

"Is that a promise or a threat?"

Marty laughed. "Probably both. Okay, Shane, what do you say?"

"It's a deal." Shane loved this banter. His whole life he wanted to be part of a team, earn a letter and see some trophies, but he was bounced from pillar to post and never finished a season of any sport at any school. This would be a great deal of fun.

Mrs. Lynch opened the door. "Since you fishermen didn't bring home a catch, let's gather around the picnic table for some tuna fish salad and chips."

This was the fish Erin could handle. "This is the kind of fish I like," Erin was still ribbing the boys as she bit into a saltine cracker. "We will see you at church tomorrow, right?"

Shane had gone to church more lately than he had his whole life combined. "I suppose you will. Grandpa and Grandma insist that we go."

At church on Sunday, Shane sat between Erin and Kosy. He was trying to listen to Pastor Ballentine, but Kosy kept nudging him. "What do you want, Little Sister?"

She leaned close to Shane and whispered, "If God loves us so much, why did He allow Dad and Mom to treat us so badly?" She was not getting much out of the preaching.

Shane did not want to disrupt the service, so he wrote on a slip of paper. "That is a question I have had myself. I think sometime we should talk to the pastor about it."

On the way home Grandpa had some good news for Shane. "Did you know that Linn County kids who live out in the country can get their driver's license at fifteen and a half?"

Shane was excited. "Really, I didn't know that! Then can I take the test Monday? I'll be the right age. Do you have any manuals I can study?"

He poured over the driving manual that night. The next day he was driven to the bureau. He was well prepared when he passed through the door. "I'm here to take the driving test."

A short plump woman stood up to the counter. She eyed the

runt and did not hesitate to give him a shaky reception. "How did you get here, Sonny?"

"Is that really important?" Shane responded politely. This lady was going to flunk him. He just knew it. She looked like she had sour grapes for lunch, or maybe crabapples.

The attendant became a little belligerent now. "Yes, it is important. If you drove your own car over here, you can't take the test because you have already broken the law."

Shane was not about to be a smart aleck with this lady. "My friend Marty Lynch drove me. He is waiting in the car."

The written exam was first. Fortunately, Shane missed only one. The rough part was next. He knew he would be nervous. It didn't help when the examiner put on a crash helmet. He looked like an actor with a part in an outer space film.

This guy was definitely the reason many fifteen year olds were still riding bicycles. The state employee gave Shane a sheepish grin, "Get in, Sonny, and we will take a little joy ride."

Shane was gingerly driving down Park Street in the right lane, when the examiner motioned. "Turn left at the Park Theater."

Since there were several cars on the left side, Shane sped up and turned left crossing in front of them. The alarmed drivers slammed on their brakes and skidded to a stop, waving their hands at Shane.

"All right, Sonny, you can pull over to the curb," the upset examiner ordered. "I'll drive back. You are a public safety hazard."

Shane mustered up a crooked grin, "You mean I flunked already?"

"That's exactly what I mean, now pull over and let me drive back while we still have all our body parts in tact."

"But didn't you tell me to turn left?" Shane protested as he pulled the car over to the curb. "I did exactly as you told me to do."

The examiner was stern now. "You are not supposed to do what I say; you're supposed to obey the laws. Come back in two days, and we'll risk it again. **YOU CAN'T TURN IN FRONT OF ONCOMING TRAFFIC.**"

By the following Wednesday Shane had it all worked out. The examiner saw him coming and just shook his head. "Here we go again!"

This time he drove without error, so he became the proud new recipient of an Oregon driver's license. The whole county could hear him hollering. "I can drive! I can't believe it! I am now on my own."

CHAPTER TEN

BOOT CAMP

Grandma placed the mail on the table. "You guys got a letter from Thomas. He must really be lonesome for you two. Do you want me to read it?" Everyone heartily agreed.

Dear Shane, Kosy and Grandparents,

First I would like to thank Grandpa and Grandma for their loving kindness, demonstrated by their willingness to take you two under their wings again. I know it will be a sacrifice, even as it was before. I will do my best to help when I can. I love you all dearly and look for the day when we can all be together again.

I received your letter about all your adventures. If you ever go through southern Oregon again, you may want to avoid Medford.

Life here is rougher than I thought. The first thing they did was mail all my personal belongings to Grandma. Have you received them yet? My most recent Soldier of Fortune magazine is in the package.

We get up every morning by the alarm. At 5:00 AM the Chief comes into the barracks and hits the trash can with a baseball bat. Then it is shower and shave. We have an inspection every day. Woe unto us if they find a lone whisker or a stained tee shirt collar.

We have to wash all our clothes by hand and hang them by the barracks. Can you imagine that? We iron our clothes with plastic soap bottles filled with extremely hot water. They won't let us have an iron. Maybe they think we will throw it at them, or each other!

There is a serious problem of spinal meningitis running rampant through the Naval Station. Training usually takes

fourteen weeks. Now they are shortening the time to eight weeks, to vacate the barracks. They want to spray disinfectant. Three sailors have already died in the last ten weeks.

We march every where we go. One evening while standing at parade rest, waiting to enter the dinning hall, I fell asleep. The Chief stood right in front of me and called

It is march, classes, march, eat, march, target practice, shipboard practice. They have a fake ship called the U.S.S. Recruit. We practice responding to general quarters drills. It is up and forward on the starboard side, down and aft on the port. And brother, you had better not forget or you will be stomped by recruit boots.

Whenever we see someone marching out of step we MUST give him a swift kick. The longer anyone marches out of step, the longer they make everyone march. Classes are about Navy regulations, shipboard life, weapons, and first aid. During one first aid class a recruit was not only asleep, but also announced his error by snoring loudly. The Chief bounced an eraser off his skull and bellowed, "Were you sleeping sailor?"

The dazed recruit responded sleepily, "No Sir, I was not sleeping, Sir."

The chief was not to be taken advantage of. "All right, if you were listening, what is the proper Navy first aid procedure for someone who is bleeding out his ears?"

The recruit stood up and shouted out what he thought would be a good answer. "Sir, the proper first aid procedure for someone bleeding out his ears would be to put a tourniquet around his neck, Sir."

The hapless recruit spent the next ten minutes doing push ups on his knuckles, even though he claimed he would have loosened the tourniquet every fifteen minutes! When we think it is rough, that we are suffering in this heat, all we have to do to feel better is look across the channel

to Paris Island. We can watch ten Marines doing sit ups with a telephone pole held to their chests or running with it on their shoulders.

We are not allowed to eat chocolate or chew gum. One recruit was caught chewing gum, so the Chief made him chew all three packs at once. Then he divided the wad in two, putting half under each of the recruit's arm pits. After the recruit did three hundred jumping jacks, he had to shave his arm pit.

If we are not careful we will make work for ourselves. All buttons are to be buttoned closed. Once I forgot the left button on my blue dungaree shirt. When the inspection officer saw it, he said, "Sailor, do you want this button?" Of course, I wanted the button. I said, "Sir, yes, I want the button, Sir." So he tore it off and slapped it in my hand. Now I have more work.

The next week I forgot again, but this time I had the answer prepared. "Sir, I do not want the button, Sir." He then tore it off and threw it away. The fire fighting drills are scary. We have to put out real blazes of extreme heat. Abandon ship drills include pushing the guy ahead of us up through a hole in the deck while tons of water come pouring through that hole.

Whenever we are given an order we have to say, "Aye, Aye, Sir." The first "Aye" means "I understand the order." The second "Aye" means "I will obey." We have guard duty. Every two hours we change the guard. Right now I suppose you are asking yourself, "What in the world do they guard?" We guard the restroom, sleeping quarters, and, of course the laundry hanging outside. Sounds exciting, huh?

We do not allow anyone to cross from barracks to barracks, nor can anyone come through without proper identification. One night an officer came stumbling along. He had too much to drink. I said, "Halt, who goes there?"

The officer held on to the laundry pole to steady himself. "I am Lt. Terrey."

I stood my ground and obeyed orders. "Sir, throw down your I.D. card, Sir."

The Lt. insisted, "I left my I.D. card at home. I'm coming through, recruit. You had better stand aside."

By now I was becoming nervous. But, our orders were clear, and obedience is expected. I decided to follow through. "Sir, you cannot come through without identifying yourself. I have my orders and I plan to complete them. Throw your hat over here. Certainly it has your name stamped inside. That will be sufficient. Sir"

The officer advanced. "Who do you think you are? I am an officer in the United States Navy. I am commissioned by the President of the United States. I am coming through, and you had better not try to stop me."

With that, he came so close I could smell the liquor on his breath. Since we don't have any bullets in our guns, I could not have shot him if I wanted to. So, naturally, I did the next best thing. I took one giant step backward and kissed his jaw with my rifle butt. With that, Lt.

Terrey decorated the ground. I called for help and some other guards came over. They all turned pale. "You're really in trouble," they all agreed.

I felt a bit sick to my stomach, but I insisted, "How can I be in trouble when I was only following orders?" Just then Lt. Commander Phillips came over. "I was watching the whole affair, recruit. You acted exactly as you were trained and ordered. I am relieving you now. You may hit the bunk. Be assured, you are not in trouble. It is Lt. Terrey that is in hot water. Although I didn't think you had to hit him quite that hard. He won't be chewing or even talking for quite a while."

I was still quite apprehensive. Instead of being in trouble they advanced me two weeks in my training. They wanted to teach everyone a lesson: "You are to obey orders even when it does not

seem convenient."

Because they advanced me, I will be coming home on Friday to spend my two weeks' leave with you and Kosy. I will arrive in Portland on Friday at 5:00 PM. Can someone come and get me at the airport?

An embarrassing thing happened to me. At lunch the sailor across from me cupped his head in his hands and looked ill. "Are you sick?" I asked. When he finally looked up, he gave me an incredulous stare. "I was praying. Don't they ever pray where you come from?" Color me red!

But, you know, we never did pray. At times here it might be the only thing that would help. I'll see you at the airport in Portland.

Your brother, Thomas SM2

Kosy was leaping around the room. "Hot dog, Thomas will be here in two days. We will have a great time when he comes. He'll even be here for the Strawberry Fair."

Julia Woods was looking forward to having all three of her grandchildren under her roof again. She was a wonderful grandmother, who had already sacrificed a great deal for these often ill-treated children. She grabbed the Bible, handing it to John "We want you kids to continue joining us in family devotions. This family is going to put Christ first."

Kosy and Shane hadn't entered into this "religion" thing whole-heartedly like Grandpa and Grandma had hoped. After devotions they had a pow-wow in the barn, while they were doing the chores.

Shane was cleaning out Bossy's stall. "I wonder what Thomas will think of all this religion stuff. He is in for a big surprise when he gets here."

"There is one sharp-looking sailor coming off the plane," Kosy bragged as Thomas greeted them at the Portland Airport. "Those dress whites are neat, Thomas. How did you get your shoes so shiny? Why, I can even see my face."

Thomas hugged Kosy long and hard. "A lot of work, Missy, a whole lot of work. Boy, is it good to see you two." Shane got that little brother handshake. "And who are these two people?"

Shane stepped alongside Erin, putting his hand on her shoulder. "This is my good friend, Erin Lynch and her brother, Marty. They are from Montana."

Thomas looked surprised. "Did you say girlfriend?"

"No, he said GOOD FRIEND," Erin added with a tint of red in her complexion which matched her hair.

Thomas shook hands with Marty. "I suppose THIS friend did the driving?"

Shane nodded, "That's right. By the way, you are now looking at a legal Oregon driver. I got my license on Wednesday. But I can't drive Bluejay until I get insurance. So, Marty agreed to drive his dad's gas-guzzling Pontiac."

The ride south was filled with exciting stories of the spring's events. Thomas was the first to quit laughing. It certainly was good to be with his family again. There were fun times ahead.

"This is something different," Thomas eyed the new expressway. "When did this freeway open?"

"Senator Wayne Morse held the opening ceremonies just two years ago. Now it only takes ninety minutes to get to Albany." Shane tapped Marty on the shoulder. "How about stopping at the T&R Truck Stop in Albany? We can get a hamburger and cherry coke. My rich and famous brother is picking up the tab."

When the waitress put the food on the table, Marty requested permission to pray for the food. He knew it would be a new experience for the Woods kids, but he followed through anyway. No one seemed to mind.

As they were leaving the T&R parking lot, Thomas had an idea. "There is a shorter way to get to Lacombe than going all the way through Lebanon. Would you be interested in learning it?"

Shane responded quickly, "We know, but Marty's dad doesn't want him to drive this new Pontiac on gravel unless it's necessary." It was 10:00 PM as they passed Brewster's Corner and headed down the ten mile straightaway to Lacombe.

As they peaked the top of Gentry's hill and started down to Five Corners, Kosy noticed something. "What is that glow to the left Thomas? It looks like a house is on fire."

That is exactly what they found as they turned left at the next corner. A two story house was ablaze. The windows on the second floor had already blown out. The three children in the front yard were screaming hysterically, while jumping around.

Erin was the first to grab the oldest child. "Where is your mommy?"

The frightened girl was trying to control her sobs. "She went back up stairs to get baby brother."

Just then Susan came running out of the burning house holding a small blanket. Her bath robe was on fire. Kosy took the bundle and Thomas smothered Susan with a blanket he had retrieved from the trunk.

"My baby, my baby, I had to get my precious baby," she cried.

Kosy opened the blanket and gasped. "Thomas, there is nothing in here but a doll."

Susan fainted!



CHAPTER ELEVEN

A TOUGH RESCUE

Thomas was in charge now. "Marty, soak this blanket in that water trough. Erin, get the towel in the trunk and soak it, too." He grabbed the oldest child. "Where is the baby's room?"

With her mother out cold and her baby brother still in the burning house, the child had a hard time containing herself. "She.. she...she is in the bedroom upstairs."

Thomas grabbed the girl by the shoulders and tried to calm her down. "How do you get to the bedroom?"

"Go . . . go in the door, go up the stairs, turn right, and it is the last room on. . on the left."

Thomas needed more information. "Where is the crib in the room?"

"It is by...by this outside window," she sobbed, pointing to the broken window. Her face was racked with horror.

Thomas wrapped his head in the wet towel, leaving only his eyes uncovered. He grabbed the wet blanket and drenched it in the water tank, and covered his whole body. Over Kosy's protest, he bounded through the door. Shane crossed his fingers and Kosy started on her fingernails.

Erin noticed their preoccupation with a shake of her head, as she thought, "If that is the best unsaved kids can do, I feel sorry for them." She started praying.

The heat inside was intense. Thomas knew it would be worse upstairs. The wet blanket should protect him from the fire. It was the smoke and the gases that would present the greatest risk. Now his navel training was coming in handy.

He hit the stairway flying, noticing that the closet under the stairs was already in flames. "I wonder if I can get out this way," he thought.

He took a sharp right at the beginning of the hallway. He could only hold his breath for so long. When he thought his lungs would burst, he hit the floor and gulped in air. Then he thought his lungs would collapse from the heat.

Before he entered the bedroom, his eyebrows started to singe. He never liked the smell of burnt hair, even less when it was his! He found the crib, but the baby was not there. He knew his dress white bell bottoms must be turning brown at the cuff by now.

The smoke made it difficult to see. Where is that baby? GOD HELP ME! He felt his way around in the room. He didn't have much time left before he became a human torch. Suddenly, he bumped into something.

ANOTHER CRIB! "Why didn't she tell me there were two cribs up here?" he was yelling to himself.

He felt around and found the baby, checking to make sure he had the real thing. It's him. "My pants are really getting hot now, I can feel the hair burning on my ankles. Why didn't I tie my pant legs closed?"

Returning to the hallway, he realized the stairs was not the way to exit the inferno. It was already engulfed in flames. The heat was unbearable. "I should have jumped in the water tank myself." Back into the bedroom.

The only way out was through the window. The sailor climbed out and stood on the slanted porch roof. Already he was being cheered, but he was not across the goal line yet. Kosy was finding it hard to chew her fingernails when her fingers were crossed. Erin was still praying.

Thomas didn't know the man who was taking pictures, but he was glad to have the extra help. He ripped off the blanket, throwing it to the kids. "Make a trampoline and hold it tight." With six people securing the blanket. Before he jumped he could feel his back warming up.

The jerry-rigged fireman's trampoline worked. The baby was snatched from Thomas' arms by a very grateful mother. Mr. Lynch spoke first. "I don't know you, Thomas, but I am very proud of you. I was able to record all that bravery on film. You deserve a medal for that rescue."

Kosy was pouring water on his pants when the mother came to thank Thomas. She was still weeping. "I...I can't tell you how thankful I am. You are the bravest person I have ever met. May God reward you for your sacrifice."

"I phoned the volunteer fire team," Mr. Lynch said. "They should have been here by now." Twenty minutes later the Lacombe

volunteer firemen did arrive, just in time to see the old house collapse.

The fire chief was noticeable upset. "We would have been here thirty minutes ago if someone hadn't siphoned the gas out of the fire engine."

"That is about the lowest, meanest trick I have heard yet," Mrs. Lynch commented. "If we ever catch those vandals we should throw the book at them."

After everything calmed down Thomas was taken to the Lynch ranch and given some better clothes. "And those dress whites were so nice," Kosy reminded them. "He'll have to buy some new ones."

"Give them to me," Mr. Lynch volunteered. "I'll see what I can do for Thomas."

The reception at the Woods farm was something to behold. Kosy was talking a mile a minute and bragging about her brave brother, Thomas. "You should have seen him, Grandma. He's really very courageous."

"I suppose I will see it," Grandma reasoned, "IF Mr. Lynch has anything to do with it. I expect it will be on the front page of the Lebanon Express tomorrow. We are proud of you, Thomas."

The sailor was a bit reflective when he laid his head on his pillow. "Shane, I could have died in that house. I don't know when to give up. I prayed for the first time since I stopped saying my, 'Now I lay me down to sleeps.' I just wonder where I would have

gone if God had chosen to take my life?"

The following day was Saturday. Grandpa did not have to work. Traditionally it was the day he would take Grandma into town to shop, if there was nothing to fix around the farm; which there usually was.

Grandma let the boys sleep in a little. They had experienced an unusually hard night. The faint smell of "Lovin' From the Oven" brought them back into the world of the living. When they reached the kitchen, the two hungry boys were greeted by stacks of pancakes and a quart of boysenberry syrup. Thomas was grinning from ear to ear. "It doesn't get better than this, Grandma."

Grandpa addressed Shane, "You will have to get your hair cut, or a dog license. Which do you prefer?"

"But, Grandpa, I'm like Samson in the Bible," Shane protested. "Without my hair I'm nothing." His pleading was to no avail.

Grandpa was completely unmoved by his humor. "No ifs, ands, or buts, my fine young grandson. If you don't have your hair cut at Hern's Barber Shop by the end of the week, I'll have Grandma give you one like Thomas got in San Diego."

"No, not that, anything but that," Shane faked despair. "Who wants to be a skinhead? You can cut it Grandma, when you have time, but please, no Government Issue job, OKAY?"

"I'll make time for that, Shane," Grandma promised. "I always say that the only difference between a good hair cut and a bad

haircut is three days."

As Grandpa was pulling the car out he had one more message for Kosy. "I want you to pick some raspberries from the patch behind the house."

"Grandpa, I hate getting in that scary raspberry patch," Kosy complained. "There are huge, ugly **yellow jacket spiders** in the bushes. They have webs this big." Kosy emphasized her point by making a circle the size of a car tire.



"Yeah, Kosy, I've seen plenty of them in there," Shane teased his sister. "They bounce their webs back and forth until they can jump right out to lovingly land right on your innocent little neck."

Kosy really looked horrified now. "Just for that, Shane, you have to help me pick the miserable raspberries, right, Grandma?"

"Shane, how can you frighten your little sister like that?" Grandma chided. "Right, Kosy, he can help kill all the spiders. We'll be back about 5:00. We want raspberry shortcake for dessert, so get busy, kids."

Shane had filled Thomas in on all the facts about the Snow Peak robberies and the murder of their friend Jeff Thibaudeau. Thomas was just shaking his head. "That is terrible. I hope those guys get caught and punished."

Kosy was working her way through the raspberry patch as Thomas looked for spiders. Shane was hanging in the cherry tree, putting the aluminum strips on the branches to frighten the hungry birds away.

Shane heard a car tear down the road heading towards the Snow Peak Bridge. He recognized the white '55 Chevy. "They are going to try again, just as I thought," he yelled to Thomas and Kosy.

Shane jumped from the lowest branch and hit the ground running. "Kosy, phone Marty and Erin. Have them meet us at Rutherford's Corner with three extra horses. Then phone Sergeant Kochian and tell him the crooks are up on Snow Peak again."

Thomas was heading for the barn. He retrieved a hemp rope and Grandpa's crossbow. The Woods kids ran to meet the Lynches at the corner. All five raced down the Snow Peak Road with the saddle bouncers trailing. Sparky, Grandpa's raccoon hound, was in hot pursuit.

"Come on," Marty yelled to the three stragglers.

"We can't go any faster until we get those riding lessons you two have been promising us," Shane explained. "You will just have to wait up for us slowpokes."

Erin slowed down to meet Shane. "What are we going to do when we get to the bridge?"

"I have an idea that might put their car into the river," Shane offered. "I noticed a Snow Peak Caterpillar along the road about

fifty yards past the bridge. They use it to keep the road clear in case of rock slides."

Thomas gave Shane an incredible look. "You just got your Oregon license, and already you want to drive a D-10? You've got to be just kidding of course."

"I think I could drive it, but that is not what I had in mind. I grabbed a hose from the garage. This five gallon can should hold enough oil."

"What oil?" Kosy asked.

Shane had to explain the whole plan. "There should be enough oil in the Cat to spread all over the area in front of the bridge and possibly even on the bridge itself. When the robbers hit that spot going eighty miles per hour, they should have a real nice spin out."

It took about twenty minutes to spread the oil on the bridge. Marty hid the horses in the bushes and ordered Erin and Kosy to stay out of sight. He looked very serious. "It shouldn't take too long before they come screaming around that corner, Shane. If they have dynamite in the car, will it blow up when the car crashes?"

"No, the dynamite will not blow up on impact unless it has the detonators in place," Thomas answered. "When they hit the bridge, I am going to shoot one of the front tires."

Shane began throwing small pebbles onto the road. "Help me with these small stones. When they hit this, it will be like

driving on marbles."

They didn't have to wait long. Before Marty could get up any speed on his nervous knee, the white Chevy came thundering around the corner, picking up speed for the straightaway. It looked like all four crooks were in the car.

When they reached the oil slick the back tires began to fishtail. The driver turned the wheel the wrong way, causing car to spin circles. They looked like a new ride at the Strawberry Fair.

Thomas let fly with a small crossbow arrow, puncturing the front tire. Hitting the rocks on the bridge made the car twist like a top.

The door swung open on the back passenger's side. One man flew over the edge of the bridge, landing face down in the channel. The car passed the end of the oil slick and began to slow down. They stopped, looked around, and then wasted no time straightening out the car, tearing off down the road.

The passenger's front door swung open and one of the thugs was clinging to the door with his elbow over the open window, bending his knees as high as they could go so he would not drag bottom. The door was still swinging back and forth, and the back tires were smoking as they peeled rubber all over the road. But the robber managed to swing right back in place and the door slammed shut.

They left their unfortunate buddy behind. As the crook's vehicle screamed off, the punctured tire threw rubber scraps high

into the air.

Three boys raced towards the man face down in the channel. Marty was gathering up rocks to throw at the already drenched crook. Shane was the first to reach the man.

"We've lost those three unless the sergeant passes them on the road," Shane yelled as he grabbed the collar of the man in the channel and turned him over.

The robber was fully conscious now. He pointed his gun right at Shane's surprised face and pulled the trigger!

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE CAPTURE

"CLICK," the hammer fell on a wet bullet. Shane almost died of a heart attack. The nearly-shot teen gasped loudly. He turned towards Thomas, his cheeks ashen white and his lips trembling. Seeing he was foiled, and noticing that Shane was not paying attention, the crook took a swipe at his pursuer, knocking him into the water. The drenched crook then jumped up and hobbled into the woods.

"He can't get too far," Marty conjectured. "He was limping some on his right leg. At least he's not armed."

Thomas retrieved the rope. "Let's go after him. He could have a knife, but that is no big deal. It is three against one."

"Make that five against one," Erin yelled. "We are not going to be left behind this time. Mount up, let's give this crook a run for his life."

With the odds definitely favoring the good guys, the kids started into the woods after the unfortunate, wounded felon. He would have been luckier if he had fallen into a hornet's nest. These



Lacomb kids were upset.

"He won't be hard to follow," Marty guessed. "Old Sparky here can even help us. Come on Sparky, get your nose into the act over here." The dog followed orders and was soon hightailing it into the bushes, trying to keep his nose on the robbers trail pretending it was a raccoon.

This guy was not trying to hide his escape. But he was heartily attempting to put as much ground as he could between himself and these bratty kids. "It is just my luck. I forgot to lock dat broken door and dat gun didn't go off." He could hear the horses coming up the road. He knew he could not out run them; he must find a place to hide.

It was all up hill except for the gradual climb of the logging road. Certainly he couldn't stay on the beaten path, they would run him down with the horses. It was straight up the hill, bum leg and all. "No dynamite is worth all dis!" he shook his head disgustedly and limped into the brush.

The terrain on the upper side of the road was not helping him. This area was cluttered with small bushes, dead, rotten tree trunks, and a lot of young closely planted fir trees, the tallest of which were shorter than his head.

A few yards up the hill the crook decided this was not his avenue of escape. He couldn't gain any ground with his sprained ankle. Down the hill and across the road he limped, as the horses rounded the bend.

The pursuers would have been fooled except for the trained nose of the hound of Crabtree Creek. Sparky followed the trail up the hill a few yards, and swung back down towards the creek again. Thomas pointed down the hill. "He is returning to the creek. Let's head back down the road."

The bad guy found a small cave and crawled inside, hoping that the occupants were out shopping for dinner. He settled down for a long wait. All he wanted to do was to rid himself of these junior detectives.

The angry teens arrived at a point on the creek where they could see much of the low brush on the down side of the logging road. Marty took out his binoculars. "He has to be on the lower side of the road now. Sparky is still coming down slowly."

Just then the crook's luck changed from bad to worse. The mountain lion who inhabited the cave decided to wake up from her morning nap. This particular feline had just littered three cubs and wasn't taking lightly any trespassing in her lair. She made her presence known to the intruder.

The cave was not big enough for the two of them, and since the mountain lion was there first, the



crook decided to let her keep the cave.

The puma didn't take kindly to strangers invading her living quarters. She charged the crook. He blew out of the cave's mouth like a human cannonball at the circus. He hit the ground on his bad leg, but still managed to make tracks for the river.

"Here he comes with a mountain lion on his tail," Marty spied through the glasses. "Man, can a crippled guy ever run fast if he has enough motive!"

The crook hit the edge of the creek and dove into channel. He was back to square one. The mountain lion decided this was too much company. She hightailed it into the deep woods.

Before he could get up again, the robber found himself completely under water. Three very-angry teens were on top of him. They decided to bring him up just in time to prevent a drowning.

"Give me the rope, Thomas," Shane yelled. "We've got ourselves a crook here. If that gun is the one that killed our friend Jeff Thibaudeau, we might even have a reward coming"

Thomas threw the man on the flat rocks and tied his hands behind his back. "Don't try anything else, you scum ball. I still have one arrow in this crossbow."

The girls were relieved when Sergeant Kochian arrived. Shane was running towards the squad car before it even came to a complete stop. "They got away in the '55 Chevy. Didn't you see them?"

Sergeant Kochian surveyed the scene. "No, I saw nothing coming down Snow Peak Road from Five Corners."

"Then they must have taken the first road to the left, which goes up by the garbage dump and comes out at Hammond Camp."

The sergeant poked his head in the squad car window. "Officer, you take the first road to the left. Try to catch them before they can get to some side trail."

"My stars, it looks like the wild west all over again. And what do we have here?" the sergeant asked as he noticed Thomas and Marty sitting on top of what appeared to be a suffering, soaked citizen.

Shane handed the gun to Sergeant Kochian and explained what had transpired. "I am one lucky kid. That gun misfired, or I would not have a head left. This could very well be the same gun that killed our friend Jeff."

"I guess we will just have to wait until the squad car returns, unless we want to join the Rough Riders," the sergeant of Linn County mused. "If we can get this guy to talk, maybe we can catch the other three."

Kosy was visibly shaken up on the way home. "Shane, if his gun had not misfired, you . . .you could have been killed." She was terrorized at the thought.

"When I was looking down that barrel, I saw my whole life run before me in a split second. I was really scared. I guess God saved my life. Now I have to find out why. I think I'll have a talk

with Pastor Ballentine."

That night Shane visited at the parsonage. Pastor Ballentine was glad to see him. "You have been listening quite attentively in the services. What I have been saying is that each person needs to be born again in order to have eternal life."

"I had a really close call today," Shane shuddered. "I need to know where I am going when I die. You have been saying that no one can earn salvation by good works. If I could earn my way to heaven, then Christ died for nothing, right?"

Pastor Ballentine was nodding affirmatively. "That is exactly what I have been trying to preach, in a manner simple enough to grasp. Apparently you have understood that much."

Shane continued, "I know I am a sinner and need to be born again. I am not positive about what I must do, that is why I am here. Do you think Christ is really interested in me?"

"God certainly is interested in you, Shane," the pastor quickly encouraged him, "That is why He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for you. Being born again means you repent of your sin and receive Christ as your personal Savior. That is done simply by praying, asking Him to come into your heart, and save you. Would you like to pray that way tonight?"

Shane's heart had been hardened by many years of being knocked from pillar to post. He had seen the rough side of life, which is foreign to most American teenagers. Living with Grandpa and Grandma Woods had given him a totally different outlook on

life, even changing how he felt about God.

Having friends like Marty and Erin helped him realize his need of Christ. They were living proof that a Christian could be faithful to his Lord, and still have a fun life. This was a serious decision. Shane had never been mediocre about anything. It would have to be all or nothing for Christ, too.

He scratched his head and thought to himself, "Now was the time and this was the place." On a hot, humid, Oregon June evening in 1962, Shane T. Woods accepted Christ as his Savior and became a child of God. Things would never be the same for this new Christian, nor would life ever hold a dull moment. Christ had just began to work in his life, the results would cross countries, continents and oceans.

EPILOGUE

On Monday Thomas received the Lebanon Silver Medal of Bravery for risking his life to save another. At the ceremonies, Mr. Lynch also presented him with a new set of dress whites. "These were donated by the U.S. Navy in appreciation for your valuable community service." Thomas was a bit embarrassed, but he humbly accepted the medal and the clothes.

Shane was beside himself with joy as he and the gang received the \$5,000 reward for the capture of one crook. The gun

proved to be the one that killed Jeff Thibaudeau.

"Well, that will make one thousand dollars each," Shane calculated. "That will certainly buy Kosy the clothes she needs to attend school this fall."

"I really don't need my money," Thomas explained. "My room and board are provided by our rich Uncle Sam. I am using my portion to buy Shane's insurance for Bluejay. I checked with Dick Bilyeu's Insurance Company. He said he would let Shane be a rider on Grandpa's policy."

"Wow, Thomas, you are the best brother I have!" Shane bragged. "And by the way, Erin, We will be at your place tomorrow morning for those riding lessons. I can't afford chiropractic sessions." Erin was smiling from ear to ear.

The secretary called Shane into the office. "You have a call on my desk phone. I think it is a woman and she sounds scared."

Shane could not even imagine what this was all about. He advanced to her desk with an inquisitive look on his face. "Hello, this is Shane Woods. Who is this?"

"Son, this is your mother."

His young heart began to race as he stuttered and said, "Mom, where are you? What is going on?" Finally, they were going to get some answers. At last they would be able to put their troubled hearts at rest. No such thing happened.

Just as she was about to answer Shane's questions, he heard someone in the background yell, "There she is, let's get her tied

down again.”

And with this threat coming her way, she said, “Bye Son, see you.....” And the line dropped.

THE END