

Walk
in
Peace

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Transforming My Life's Experiences

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I dedicate this book to both my sons. I hope that now they will better understand the events that happened, because they are grown men. Regardless how hard our life was, I am proud of you. I enjoyed our bonfires, football games and basketball games, our card games and swimming. You grew up way too fast. I love you both dearly. I also dedicate this book to my husband, for being so patient while I worked on it and my website and radio talk show.



Contents

MAKING ME

- 1. Growing Up.....3
- 2. My Guiding Strength.....9
- 3. My New Life.....15

CHANGES

- 4. Starting Over19
- 5. Family Trouble21
- 6. My Day in Court25
- 7. Caring for Others29
- 8. My Empty House.....31

FAITH IN MYSELF

- 9. Hope and Courage.....37
- 10. Fairness39
- 11. Looking Forward.....41

Making Me

Chapter 1

Growing Up

THIS IS MY own personal story. In the following pages you will find courage, sympathy, empathy, and a growing yearning to understand the past, the present, and the future. I will not mention names. The point of this book is not to point fingers, but to learn and to teach—and to overcome all things that you thought were not possible.

To all the people who ever knocked someone else's dream because you were too afraid to dream yourself, I hope you find a heart. I want to give people the courage and the hope to pursue their dream and never listen to the negativity. The negativity is a tool that can only drown your desire. Listen to your heart and feel your dream. Never give up on yourself.

I grew up poor and didn't know my father. That brought all kinds of abandonment issues that lasted pretty much all my life. When I really reflect and think back, I can see all the times it affected me. Even when I thought it didn't. If I am in a crowded place, that is my biggest fear—to be left alone, to be abandoned, to know absolutely no one. To be scared and left feeling helpless, just like that little child. That was the same feeling I experienced as a little girl—that same sense of abandonment.

I was always the independent type. I really didn't have any friends until I got older. That was how it always was. As a child of five, I remember putting people's groceries in their car for a tip at the local A & P that was real close to my house. At the end of the day, I would buy those white powder donuts as a treat for myself. They were a dime back then.

At school I was always in trouble. I remember the principal always walking the halls. I used to squeeze into a locker so he wouldn't see me. If you were caught in the hall, you were in trouble. That was back when they used wooden boards to hold open the door to the fire escape. That brought some fresh air into a stuffy room. And if you were caught talking, or anything else, the teacher would spank you with that board. I'm glad they don't do that anymore.

My favorite place to go was to church. I couldn't wait for the church doors to open. It was the safest place in my world that I could go. I used to sit in the pews and listen to every word that came out

of that preacher's mouth. He told stories, and they sang songs. I didn't go into the kids' classrooms. I wanted to sit with the grownups, so I did. Sometimes the preacher would yell some of his stories, but that just meant he was really trying to get people to understand what he was talking about. My brother left crying, because he didn't understand. He thought the preacher was yelling at him. But I always came back every chance I could. I wanted to hear another one of his stories. Even now as an adult, I still love for my husband to tell me a story—but no one ever tells one like that preacher man did.

I grew up in Harvey, and we were pretty poor. For a long time I remember we ate hot dogs and pork 'n' beans for every meal—every breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I used my mom's old curler box to eat on. But we never went hungry. Back then, when you were on food stamps, they gave you food stamp coins too. And at the A & P, they had S & H Green Stamps that you got when you bought something. People used to save them and buy things with them.

I remember walking home from school one day when I was in first grade. At that time they had an actual police officer as a crossing guard. I asked the officer, "What happens to a man's things once he dies?"

"They would go to a relative," the officer said. I responded, "What if he didn't have any relatives?" The officer said that it would go to the city.

“He works his whole life to get whatever he has, and it ends up that the city just takes it,” I said. “That’s not fair!”

He must have noticed the expression on my face when I said that. I must have really surprised the officer, because he started questioning me. “Do you know someone who’s hurt?”

“No,” I said. “I was just wondering what happens to their stuff.” “Well then,” he said, “you just move along and don’t worry about that.” I learned at a tender age that possessions are just that—possessions. Once you die, it really doesn’t matter what you have. It’s just possessions.

I used to lie awake at night and think about the other kids who were in foster homes. I always wondered what their life was like. When I got out of school I would go babysit and after that, it was time to get home and go to bed. I hated my life as a child; I always wanted to be in a foster home. I would pray every night, “Dear Lord, please don’t make me wake up. Or if I wake up, please let me wake up in a foster home.” It never happened. I always woke up in the same bed in the same place—home.

I began acting out more at school; my grades fell from good ones to very poor. I wouldn’t talk to anyone. I started running away when I was young. My friends were always the best. They never asked any questions, and they brought me food. At night I slept in the backseat of cars—or a friend would sneak me into their house when their parents fell asleep. The ending was always the same—I had to go back

home. They would find me. Each time they asked, “Did you learn anything?” My response was always, “Yeah, I should have brought more candy bars.”

That was a long time ago, but I still remember it like it was yesterday. That’s when I learned about compassion and empathy. When you are lying there cold and hungry and afraid—even then you think about people who have it harder than you. I think that’s what the preacher told me about in one of his stories. Always be grateful for what you have! Some people don’t have anything. I at least had shelter for the night.

One time something came up missing. We were all asked who took it; but no one fessed up so we all got the belt. It still hurts thinking about it. That’s when I learned about owning up to something. I didn’t take it and I never would, and I don’t care how much I was beat. Later, the thing was found; it had just been misplaced. But I knew that inside me, no matter what ever happened in the future, I would always take responsibility for my actions. I would own up to them because I would never want anyone else to suffer because of something I did.