

Chapter 1

"Write these things which you have seen and what you will see."

56 months of denial later, I began to write.

June 6, 1993

Laguna Beach, California

With only a cooler and a surf board

I was never happier

To all the children of the world who have nothing

You have everything

Wings were made for you

The Beginning

The Mystery-The Beginning

He was a good man, although I never really knew him he was a very good man. If there were only a way that I could wind back the clock and be with him just one more time. If I could only have shown him the things that I know, how to exercise and not consume mass quantities of egg yolks, bacon, fatty meats and pastries, not to mention a carton of cigarettes a week, camel non-filters no less! If there was ever a man that was respected and loved although not a political figure head or actor or teen idol it was this man. How could a man this loved pass on from this world at such a young age? At forty-nine years young how could someone so close to his family and friends leave in the prime of his life? Well there is a reason for everything and when I held my father's hand for the last time then felt it slip away, I knew. At only four years old I knew there was a reason.

He was such a happy man, he would call everyone up to come over for a cookout. After rushing to the store to pick up the things that mom wanted he would give us kids the special treats that he had bought for us, usually Reece's Peanut Butter Cups or Snickers. He would then proceed to take the watermelon down to the creek behind the house where he would put it to keep cold. This was like a ritual for him, company coming... have a watermelon in the creek ready to go. He was so generous too. If someone needed something he just couldn't say no, he would do favors for people just to see them smile. And speaking of smiles his was worth a million bucks. As his teeth would show and his lips curled up to a big dimple on each side of his cheeks, his smile was so big it brought out happy lines on the sides of his eyes some people call crows feet. His forehead had permanent surprise lines, the kind you get when you raise your eyebrows. His hair was thick and black and framed his weathered olive skin. To look into his eyes was to remind yourself of just how little you have done and seen, and of just how much you want to cuddle up with this man and listen to him speak, listen to him breathe, listen to him laugh and watch other people listen. *"The bombs were dropping all around us"*, he'd say *"the guns were going off ratta tat tat"* his sound effects were so realistic you would almost run for cover. But I guess being on the front line in the heat of World War II (*the battle of the bulge*) to be exact, you would develop a pretty good ear for the sound of M-1 carbines, bazookas, Sherman and king tiger tanks, not to mention the sound of fellow soldiers being wounded or killed.

As darkness fell upon him and the only light was from the moon or sometimes a lighter normally used for a "smoke", he would take out the picture of his wife, although tattered torn and faded from continual exposure to water, mud, snow, and the inside of a pocket shared with items not so delicate. With the photo held in one hand and a little black book (not used for phone numbers) in the other he would read, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, He maketh me lye down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul"* he'd pull the picture in tightly to his chest, *"Yeah though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, thy comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies."* The thought of never seeing his wife and kids again brought tears and pain. His head curled down to form the ball his body became. Huddled in the muddy corner of a tiny foxhole, he read the last lines of comfort to somehow help him sleep. *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, Amen."* He would read this, *The Twenty-Third Psalm* every night to somehow help him make it through. Well it worked, and although I'm sure he didn't get much sleep, many months and one *Purple Heart* later he made it through and made it home. Home to the love of his life and all he lived for, Margaret "Dolly", his son Albert Jr. and newborn daughter Marjorie.

Telling old war stories sounds like a common thing for men to talk about, but this man had a way with words, and telling stories be they fiction or not he could captivate an audience like no other. The way he would cultivate everything and bring past experiences into something happening in the present to teach us a lesson was something even Walt Cleaver would envy. And sing, well he was no Frank Sinatra but he sure would give it a helluva try. He would make up little songs for each of us kids, each with our names in them so we would know they were our song. For our mother he had a special tune he would always sing although he didn't write it. It went something like this "Oh hello Dolly, yes hello Dolly, its so nice to have you back where you belong". Yeah, something like that. She would always smile and say "*oh Al*" whenever he would do it. But you sure could see the girlish fickle in her grin every time he did it. Yep he sure loved that woman. How many men do you know drive for most of their lunch hour just to spend a few moments with their wives only to have her say shhhh I can't hear the TV, as she sat and watched her soap operas. But still, day after day he would do it. Somehow I know that when he drove away she would smile

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and say to herself *boy he does love me*. But soaps or not the house was always clean and supper on the table when the big dude got home. Kind of her apology for the daily soap and shut up ordeal.

Now you have to realize this is some time later because when Al Jr. and Marjorie were kids there was no TV and surely no soaps. No, this was seven kids (in all) three hundred thousand eggs, half a semi of ricotta cheese, five hundred bottles of Bayer aspirin and two million diaper pins later. Yes this man truly was one in a million. Whenever someone needed something he was there and on time as well. He was the neighborhood fix it man and a Jack of all trades. You name it, plumbing, heating, AC, electrical, the neighbors got a problem, they call Al. And as far as his family goes he would do anything for them, including respect them by visiting often even though some would seldom if ever visit him. So to sum it all up he was simply a wonderful man, a perfect husband and father, a spiritual role model who would always say "*Jesus first myself last and others in between*" and someone who's shoes I could never fill in a million lifetimes.

Now why would someone so wonderful, so full of life and love be taken from us at such a young age? Well besides the saying "*only the good die young*" I believe in something called a "*guardian angel*" a spiritual helper if you know what I mean. Someone to watch over a person or persons. Someone to comfort and guide in times of crisis or need. And boy if anyone was worthy of such a task it was this man. The faith he had and the devotion to reading the bible every night and daily prayer was unparalleled by anyone I have seen. I will never forget the time, and it's hard to remember things when you were only 3 or 4 but when they are traumatic you remember. The time when I was running from one of my cousins trying to kiss me and I fell into a window well cracking my head on the concrete well at the bottom. All that I remember is waking up in my fathers arms as our neighbor sped us to the hospital, seeing the blood soaked towel wrapped around my head and my fathers face covered with concern and love as he prayed for my life. Well obviously his prayers were answered and if my guardian angel is listening now I just want to say thank you again. Thank you for giving me, and saving my life.

Now I don't know if every family or every person has a guardian angel but I know this one does. Even if it is only in my heart, mind and soul, I know he is there and always will be. But I wonder a lot of things, things like if there is any reason why the restaurant built when he was born, just happened to be the

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one he ate at the night he died. Coincidence? Maybe, who knows? A lot of things now days are brushed off as coincidence, why not that? Now that we are on the subject of his death I think it is safe to say that in order for a guardian angel to become official I believe they must pass over to the other side. I will, as long as I live never forget that night.

He came home after traveling many miles on a road trip for work already exhausted from the drive. He was rushed by us kids the minute he walked through the door, which surely wasn't unusual. Tonight one of us had a special request "*Dad, dad could you go to the parent/teacher night tonight?*" cried my brother Ralph who was about 13 at that time. "*There having volleyball and food and its going to be a great time, please, please dad please?!*" "OK" said the pleaser of all pleasers, "I guess" and he proceeded to round up the family for the outing as the kids jumped for joy.

Manning Jr. High, west of 70 on 32nd. in Golden, Colorado was the school. Ralph was proud to have his father represent him. As the tired but ever exuberant weekend athlete went up for another spike, "*Where does he get all that energy?*", said our mother, watching him dive to save a point. He said more than once how he needed to quit smoking as he served the second game. I really don't remember a whole lot about that night but there is one thing that sticks in my mind and I will never, ever forget it. After about five straight games he decided to take a break. "*Come here little Joe.*" he said as he took me by the hand and we started toward the door. "*Lets go outside and get some air.*", he said. "*No daddy you need a drink a water.*", I replied, and him being him we went to get the drink of water. His right hand in my left I can still see the half lit hallway that to me seemed to go on forever. We walked for what seemed to be a mile although in reality was probably 50 feet. There it was in the distance coming closer and closer. In the silence of the half dark corridor you could only hear the sound of his footsteps and the pitter patter of mine trying to keep up. Not a word was spoken to my recollection as I watched us draw nearer to the *fountain*. My hand began to clench tighter in his with the anticipation of him sweeping me up for the first drink. Then it happened. The walls in the hallway seemed to disappear and the darkness gave way to light. Not literal light but the intense sensation that light-heat best describes. You could hear a pin drop as the footsteps came to a halt. I turned in desperation looking up to him, with my little hand tight in his, I watched him fall. Like a giant redwood tree being cut down and the life just swept from it. Hitting the

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ground with a mighty crash, my guardian became my angel. His hand let go of mine and I looked upon his face that was pressed against the cold hard floor. There was a peace about his look almost as though he was sleeping. Then this feeling came over me that I will never in mere words begin to explain. This feeling was truly *the beginning* of my life, my purpose and the entire reason for my being.

I knew something was happening, but at four years old you don't know about death, at least not back then. "*Wake up daddy, wake up!*", I said. There was of course no response so I ran back to the gym yelling, "*mommy come quick daddy fell down*". She and Dr. Powell our neighbor who just happened to be there came running along with every one else. Immediately Dr. Powell began CPR but it was hopeless. Our mother was hysterical and when the paramedics arrived it was her that got the shot. One can only imagine how she must have felt. The only man she had ever loved and had been with since the age of fourteen, gone forever. Gone from her life never to have and to hold again.

As I stood there and watched from a distance although very confused, I felt this strange sense of peace inside me. The sensation was coupled with a kind of joy that overwhelmed me. I could hardly contain myself as I quickly covered the huge smile on my face. I didn't until now, nearly thirty years later even begin to understand. Something or someone was in control of the situation and it certainly was no one person in that room. But for what had just happened this something or someone had a reason.

"My father, me to you"

Adam Albert Joseph

Your first "Clue"

Listen

"Wings were made for you"

Read
"Woman"