SUMMIT OR BUST

RON DRAKE'S STORY



RONALD WILLIAM DRAKE

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Ron Drake's Story

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1945 – 2026

“*Never give up on your dreams; be true to your dreams.*”

RON DRAKE

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All I Have Yet to Give

ALL I HAVE YET to give: my memories, my thoughts, and my words. This is Ron's story. The story will be told in chapters of my life, beginning with thanking Jesus Christ, my Savior and my Lord, who blessed me with parents and immediate family who were loving, kind, caring, and possessed all of the wonderful attributes you could mention. So thank you, my Lord, as You have walked with me so many times, me not knowing that You were there, but You were there.

I first need to express my love for two very special people and their fellas. Rhonda and Val have both been in my life for over 20 years, and at certain times we were there for one another, and especially they were there for me. My dearest, loving friends have encouraged me to do my memoirs, as they say, and so I'm following up on that, and I do thank them both for being such a big part of my life.

At this time, I want to share the last 48 hours, this weekend of July 29. I was blessed once again by having Rhonda and John here with me, and then this Monday morning, I was able to talk to my friend Val for 2 1/2 hours, lifting one another up, as was the case with Rhonda and John the day before. They have been so encouraging that I continue Ron's story.

PART ONE

Edgewater to Durango

CHAPTER ONE

Growing Up in Edgewater

I SHOULD ALSO SHARE the times. In 1945, when I was born, my dad, employed at Public Service, was probably, like most people, making somewhere in the range of $2,500 annually. It was a time, like I said, of one car in the garage; TV did not come to our home until 1955 or 1956. We gathered on Sunday nights in our pajamas and listened to a few programs on the radio. One telephone was pretty common, and we still got our milk delivered from Gibson Dairy. Most of the homes had what was referred to as a milk door. It was like a dog door, but built to the side of the back door, with a door on both sides, so as needed, with the empty bottles, the delivery man would fill the order. They were the suppliers of milk, butter, and cottage cheese; the dairy was in Wheat Ridge. And I believe that he came around twice a week.

Also, during this time, the United States of America was fighting two wars, one in Europe against Germany and one in Asia against Japan.

I can remember as far back as when I was 12 years old, going to downtown Denver to see the movie Old Yeller with my brother, my mother, my cousins Mary Helen and Christie, and Aunt Annabelle, on the bus that we would catch down by Sloan's Lake. It was a time when most families could afford only one vehicle. This was always something we looked forward to, and it was not a common event.

My next snapshot: I can see myself sitting at the dining room table on my 13th birthday, unwrapping a cardboard helmet and a set

of shoulder pads mostly made of cardboard. Dad was a big, strong, powerful man, but being a hard worker for his family, he had no athletics in his young life, nor do I suppose that, during that time, anything other than baseball was important to a community. Dad was taught violin at an early age, and later in life he taught himself how to play the piano and the organ that we had here at the Haven.

Mom was an angel. I can't think of any other words to describe her. There will be chapters to follow about my mom and my dad, if there are enough words to describe them; a chapter about growing up in Edgewater and the family connections there; and possibly a little history about the Lumberg and the Drake families.

When the Phillips family (my best friend at that time was Bubby) moved to Cortez, Colorado, they asked that I take care of their yard during the interim while the house was being sold. This was during my eighth-grade year, when I had the job of keeping their yard mowed, trimmed, and watered. I also mowed my uncle's yard, and that is when I found out you need to work if you want to get what you would like to have in life. I bought myself a narrow-tire bicycle. It was black and pretty sporty, if I remember.

Denny and I had a drug problem: we were drug to church every Sunday, like every member of our family, to children's church and then church with the adults. Along the way I found a bulletin describing the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Believing that I was a Christian and maybe some level of an athlete, I sent away for a brochure and a T-shirt. I had the money to do this on my own, LOL. I honestly believe this may have been my first encounter with the reality of Jesus Christ. Yes, we were going to church every Sunday, but I do not remember ever being asked to accept Christ as my Savior, and that breaks my heart if that is the case, but we did find the way.

Early on, I had a desire to coach, and at the age of 13 I would take my neighbor and two of his friends, who were five or six years younger than I was at that time, up to the Lumberg Elementary

baseball field across from Jefferson High School, and we would play baseball. I played baseball with the local team and got all my Little League experience in the neighborhood. I have a picture book that will show team pictures, you know, the stuff.

My brother played football, and because he did it, it's what I was going to do. There will be several chapters written about my brother. Denny and I heard too many times, "Hey, Drake, you're going to sue those legs of yours for lack of support." Yeah, that was the case, at least with me, but I am praising God for these legs. They got me a scholarship and showed me another life, which I will cover in another chapter.

To know me, you know that I was not blessed with a muscular body, not the type that most football players have. I believe the lack of ability made me better, because I worked harder to achieve those goals. I played football in high school, and I also played baseball. First base was my spot, and my senior year I was awarded Most Valuable Player, selected by my teammates. I earned a scholarship for football at Fort Lewis College in Durango: the 165-pound kid, shy, without confidence.

Yes, I had a girlfriend my junior and senior years who turned out to be the boys' mother later in life. That will be another chapter, when we move to Summit County and start our lives at 9,206 feet above sea level in Dillon.

I will talk more about the story in Edgewater as I go through, chapter by chapter. So, I must move on to get to my story.

CHAPTER TWO

352 Miles to Durango

MY COUSIN HARRY LUMBERG was on the same basketball team as my brother in 1959. They won the state championship the year my brother graduated; Harry graduated one year later. Harry's nickname was "the Tree." Harry was 6'7" tall and weighed about 220 pounds. He went to Fort Lewis College and had a very successful career there, and because of the little success that I had had up to that point, he invited me to come for a weekend to see the college and experience what it was all about. He introduced me to his head coach, Don Waylon, who was also the athletic director. Once again, I believe God's hand was in this, for we made that connection. I gave Coach Waylon contact information for my two coaches, Pete Kerner in football and Stan Ward in baseball. I've often thanked Harry.

But I'll move on now. I had to be at early camp, which seems to me was about the 15th of July. I had yet to have my 18th birthday and was really very unsure of myself. I loaded up the '49 Ford that I inherited from my brother and drove 352 miles to Durango.

Now, Fort Lewis College, with government grants, made it possible for Indigenous students from all over the country, including Alaska, to have a free education, so there was a lot of culture, which really blended well. Also, the Nordic Olympic ski coach was also the coach at Fort Lewis, and so a lot of future Olympic Nordic skiers attended the college, somewhat like it was and is at DU.

Football

Fort Lewis was in NCAA Division II, in the Rocky Mountain Conference, which consisted of Colorado School of Mines, Colorado College, Greeley, Western State, Adams State, Southern Colorado State College, New Mexico Western, New Mexico Highlands, and Southern Utah State College, against which I scored my first TD as a freshman. Of the 38 or so games that I suited up for, I was able to, believe this or not, start in 33 of those games. Well, I'm going to tell you how that all turned out.

I made the traveling team. I was the third man at my position on the right side of the field. We played a pro set, in which at my position I was either down as a tight end or spread wide. If I was down as a tight end, no bigger than I was, I would either double-team with the tackle, run a route, or have a blocking assignment at one of the two levels. In the third quarter of the first game, the starting senior, who was also the kicker, broke his toe. The other freshman, from Farmington, New Mexico, came in to start. He was benched in the second quarter of the third game with a concussion.

Yeah, guess what? I had some playing time, but now I was at the top of the list. I've shared the story with many of the teams that I coached over the years, and it wasn't about me necessarily; it was about being ready, always ready, knowing that you would have an opportunity and it would be up to you how you dealt with it. It was an unbelievable season, beyond anyone's expectations, especially mine.

The other two games I missed were the last two games of my junior year, when I got a hip pointer injury after going up for a pass, which I caught, but I was nailed with a helmet on the tip of my right hip. I had never hurt so bad up until that time: a massive intrusion to the soft tissue and a bruised hip bone. It's the only time in all of my football years that I had a coach come out to check on me.

I will mention that the only other time I was hurt playing football was as a freshman in high school, and I can still see it today. I was chasing a kid, trying to tackle him. I stuck out my right hand, I felt my right hand hit his heel, and I broke my wrist. I've done a couple of other dumb things not related to football, a sport I loved. My ankles were always taped in college, because yeah, as we were teased, lack of support.

Once again, as I share Ron's story, I want to be, and will be, constantly reminded that through all of my life I've had the Lord Jesus's hand on my shoulder. Did I know it at the time? No, but I did pray as I lay on the wrestling mats in the gymnasium, whether we were at home or not. I would pray to God for His protection and that He would give me the ability to play the best game I could play. Who we were playing that Saturday would determine whether or not I threw up my breakfast a couple of hours before the game.

The Dorm

I lived in the dorm the first year, and of course the senior dorm advisor was the greatest guy in the world. He graduated, was drafted, and was in Vietnam for 45 days before he was killed. I went to Bill McCartney's Promise Keepers convention in Washington and saw the Wall and found his name. It was something that was on all of our minds, knowing that we would be there someday ourselves. I have in my picture book a statement which I don't feel is appropriate to include, but it was my promise that if I did go to Vietnam, I would settle some things for him.

Work, School, and the House on Main Street

By being an early student, I had a chance at some jobs the food supplier had for those who wanted to work. I was able to get a job in the morning dish room for two hours a day. Two other freshman

players also signed up, and they turned out to be my roommates the next year at a house that we found on N. Main St., across the street from the fairgrounds and catty-corner to the Durango liquor store. The owner of the house owned the motel next door and would rent the house out to tourists during the summer, but then in the winter, or the school season, would rent it to college kids.

Because Fort Lewis was on a trimester system, we were always out a month early in the spring to search for a job. Thanks to Uncle Frank and my dad, both with Public Service, who had connections with all the subcontractors, I was able to get a job with Sturgeon Electric within a few weeks. I was told to just go down every morning, ready to go to work, and I'd soon be hired, and that's what I did, and that's what happened. I raised enough money working in the summer and selling the '49 Ford to a friend of Denny's, Jimmy, that I purchased a 1963 yellow Volkswagen Bug that got me through the rest of my college life. I always thought that if I had $300 to $350 in the checking account when I went back to school, plus my jobs and the benefits, I would be living on the high side.

That summer I trained vigorously at least three nights a week, going to Jefferson High School, running the track, and working on my pass patterns, and once in a while I could get one of the guys to go with me and pass the ball to me, and the time flew by.

Beginning my sophomore year, I was even more excited, moving in with my roommates from Olathe, Colorado, and Center, Colorado. One was a defensive linebacker, one a fullback. One worked with the cooks as a helper; the other worked with me in the dish room. Yeah, a pretty prestigious job. Loved it. We had the most fun at Christmastime. We were singing Christmas carols, and we just made it a party from 7 to 9 in the morning on a college campus. Who would've ever thought you could have so much fun in the morning?

My share of the rent at the house we got was $25 a month. I had a new job in the new freshman cafeteria, where I became the good-

morning person who made sure that the milk, coffee, and juice containers were full and the silverware was out, and I didn't have to clean tables: two hours in the morning, and then on Wednesdays, two hours in the student union snack bar. I believe that job paid $10 to $15 a month. Gas at that time was, I believe, 26 to 28 cents a gallon, and I could go from Denver to Durango on one fill. Yeah, things were easy then.

Now it's football season, and I'm working two hours every day on the breakfast shift, two hours on Wednesday in the snack bar, football from three till seven, by the time we have dinner, and trying to go to class, which was much easier in college than it was in high school. I made sure that I made it to all the college classes I could; it was much easier for me. I was not very good at reading on my own, and I did not have my cousin Mary Helen, as I had in high school, to copy her homework papers when she would let me.

My room was in the back of the house. One of the roommates moved out, and the new kid on the block was a wrestler and running back from Commerce City who moved in to live with his brother. He turned out to be one of my groomsmen. Off of my bedroom was a screened-in porch. The other door led into the kitchen and down the hall to the bathroom. There was the front bedroom, which was right off the main highway, and the bedroom right next to the bath, a big country kitchen, a single-car garage for storage, and two apple trees in a fairly maintained backyard. Once again, the owner also had the motel right next door. Our second and third years, or at least my second and third years, the rent went up to $30 a month for each of us. I'm pretty sure I met my goal of taking $300 to $350 back with me in my checking account, now with my job, which stayed the same. The only change was that I was making a little more money, I believe about $20 a month, with Saga Foods, but we were living very comfortably. I'm pretty sure about that.

This was a time with no TV; radio was our means of communication and contact with the world, and we all tried, either on cam-

pus in the student union or at the house, to catch Paul Harvey's syndicated radio broadcast, which kept us current.

I was studying to get a business degree, and I always tried to tie my electives into other subjects. Some were sports related: kinesiology, physiology, sports medicine. Child and adolescent psychology, and of course all the business classes: Accounting I and II, Economics I and II, statistics, business law, policy and procedure, marketing. Once again, I think not having a lot of extra time made me a better student. In fact, I know that was the case. My business thesis was written on the potential of a McDonald's making it in the late '60s, and no.

CHAPTER THREE

Trouble

Meeting Trouble

I ALSO MENTIONED THAT part of my new job was working the breakfast shift. One morning a very dear friend of mine, Kathy, came up to me and said that there was a young lady over at that table who was asking about me and wanted to meet me. As I looked over my shoulder and saw what appeared to be an angel, to be honest, I'm not sure how I felt. It didn't take me very long to go over to where she sat, and I asked her name. Her name will not be mentioned; she will be referred to only as Trouble. Of course, my duties, as simple as they were, presented an opportunity to excuse myself and go gather myself up. I believe the thing I noticed most about her, other than that she had a glow about her, was that her eyes were full of mischief. In my picture book you can see what I mean. Every morning as I went to work and performed my duties, I was excited to see if she was going to be there.

Yes, every morning she was, and as we talked more and spent time in casual conversation, I felt more comfortable in her presence. She was a freshman. Her family had just moved to Cortez; her father was a new manager at a plywood manufacturer, from Colorado Springs originally. When I think about it, she was 18, and I had just turned 19: so young, so new at life, so new at young love. She stole my heart. I hardly had a date my first year; I was too busy, and with dorm life... She started to show up on Wednesdays when I

was working in the snack bar in the student union building. I offered to make her a cheeseburger, because I had access to the grill. It cost me probably 50 cents. Well spent.

Becoming more and more excited about this very appealing young lady, I asked her if she wanted to go with me to see The Sound of Music at the theater. I can honestly say I'm not surprised, but she did accept the invitation. I do remember very clearly going with John and his friend Barbara, who drove, with Trouble and me in the backseat. The theater was filled with college kids, because, with the exception of a few hangouts, that was the weekend treat; the college did show films on Sunday nights and had lectures on occasion.

I remember, as if it were yesterday, that about halfway through the three-hour movie, I put my arm up around the back of her shoulders. It's pretty common, is it not? And with her right hand she reached up and grabbed my hand, and then with her left hand she reached over and grabbed my left hand, and we held hands, as awkward as that seems. That seemed to become the way it was at the theater. Yeah, once in a while it was hard to hang on to the popcorn and the pop that we shared, but as I look back, she was in my life, showing me in her own way the road that soon would follow.

I remember when, timidly, as we drove up School Hill, we shared our first kiss. We dropped the girls off. I had left the Volkswagen parked on campus, and I went on home to the house, which was going to play such an important part of my college life, as a place where we could get off campus.

The more time we spent together, the more she started showing up after training-table dinner, and we would talk. But it's 8 o'clock at night, and I get up at six, and I'm pretty tired after a full day; still, it was certainly easier to fall asleep with the image of her, young love in our young lives, and it seemed like halves coming together to make a whole. She was so young; she was so alive. She brought me joy. I never knew a love like hers. I have never known,

she loved me like I have never been loved, not really knowing what love was like, but she was like a lightning bolt that pierced my heart.

It's the latter part of October and homecoming week. We have been seeing each other quite a bit, and I asked her to be my date, and of course she said yes. I remember that after the fireworks and the pep rally, I walked her to the dorm and kissed her good night with anticipation of what tomorrow would bring. Yes, I was excited about the game, but more than that, Trouble had signed out Saturday night so we could spend our first night together. This was a surprise that she had shared two days before. We did win the game, and after a little time spent at the dance, we went to the house. This would be the first time for her and the first time for me; she unveiled herself to me, and I to her. You might say Trouble became a young woman, and I became a young man. The times we were able to be together, we learned the art of making love.

I was thinking about why we didn't spend a lot of time at college hangouts: there were so few. We had the house. One telephone, one radio; we played records and played lots of cards. She taught me how to play bridge, which of course is a partners' game, and if you know anything about bridge, you have to depend on and trust the hand that your partner has. That might be a good example of what life is all about: the hand that your partner plays is going to help you to have a winning hand. There was little spare time available, but that little time was spent trying to stay ahead of her mischievous ways. In my picture book are the few special pictures that I have from the yearbook, and one that set off these memories of 60 years ago, and I will share that story in a while.

I'm sorry, have you ever known anybody like Trouble? She was like a fluttering butterfly. She was like the stone that you throw into a calm and peaceful pond, and that stone causes waves to splash against the stony shore. She was like a spring breeze that would cool the night. Yes, all of these. She was a sophomore, and for the rest of her college career she was on the cheer team. Did I have a

little to do with that? I don't think so. That same year Trouble was Spirit Queen, and my good buddy Mike was Spirit King. There again, I have pictures of her and her piercing eyes. I can still see them today.

A New Life Together

Now it's the end of the year, and we will be coming back to school in the fall as a sophomore and a junior. Back to work with Sturgeon Electric. We conversed by letter and the occasional phone call. She came up and stayed with us in Edgewater after visiting her cousins in Colorado Springs. We went to the Public Service picnic at Lakeside, which was always held in the summer. Public Service would rent the park, and everything was free. The summer went fast. I was more excited to get back to school than I ever was, more than ever, getting back to spend the rest of my life with Trouble.

Now I'm almost 20, and she would be 20 in June. We start a new life together. With my schedule, I needed the Volkswagen in the morning, and during football, at least by seven. So I made the VW available to Trouble for any need that she may have had, in or out of town. Often on a weekend she would leave and drive up to the campus and then come back in the morning. There was a place to park the Volkswagen off the side street, between the single-car garage and the house. Those mornings I would hear the Volkswagen roar up and anxiously wait to hear and see her. I could hear the screen door open and close; sometimes she would slam it, in the devilish way that she had, and sometimes she would be very quiet. Often I would play as if I were asleep, with my back to the door, and anxiously wait for her to come up, crawl up behind me, and hug my neck. There was a window between the screened-in porch and the house, and light would often shine in close to my bed.

I can remember those nights when I would hold you in my arms. We would look to the moon; it was a full moon, mostly. Your eyes

would reflect the light from the stars above, and it would shine onto your cheeks, your lips moist with anticipation of what might happen. How those nights will be played over and over and over, like that award-winning movie.

When she would spend the night, only on weekends when we could make that happen, she would usually wear one of my practice jerseys as her nightgown. Now it's Trouble's sophomore year, my junior year. Trouble will be 20 in June. She was a Gemini, and I was a Libra. If you believe anything in a horoscope, we were very compatible.

Mischief

The things that I most remember about Trouble are the things that she did for me in really just the short time that we were together, three school years, losing some time in the summers. Yes, these were some of the big events that I'll never forget, but I'll never forget the little things that she did, the simple, loving things that she did to show her love for me. On my 20th birthday, a September Saturday, at the football game, as I came running out onto the field at halftime, there was a banner across the back wall at the track, and the little shit, with the cheer team, sang happy birthday. The banner read, "Number 84 on the field, number one in your heart. Happy birthday." I know I was very embarrassed. Who wouldn't be, with possibly a crowd of 1,800 students and a great following from the town, and of course Bucky and Bubby and Bubbles? The coach said, "Get it together, Drake. Happy birthday." I don't know whether I played very well the rest of the game or not, but she went out of her way to let her mischievous side prevail.

She had the keys to the Volkswagen as she needed them, and with that the key to the house, and I'm not sure that we locked it anyway. One day, after a hard practice and a meal, I met her, got the car back, and went home, probably pretty ready to go to bed. I

opened my bedroom door. It was full, or let's say half full, of balled-up paper, the size of softballs, about half deep in my bedroom. Now, how can you explain this, other than the fact that somebody who might have a key to the house, or a ride to the house, had papered your room? And how is it possible, in a short time, to fill it half full of rolled-up balls of paper, unless you do it elsewhere and bring it in bags? Well, that's what happened. Instead of making my way through to my bed, I slept on the couch in the living room. Mad? No, not really. It took a few days to bag up the paper, put it in the garage, and take it a bag at a time up to the college. How did they do it? They went out the window.

If you recall Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, an old western, a lot of it was filmed down in Durango, and there's the part where Butch and Sundance jump off a cliff into the river. This is at Baker's Bridge, along the Animas River north of town. Trouble and I, hand in hand, jumped off that cliff, 14 to 16 feet or so, into a calm pool, at least in the fall. This is when Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid was filmed, some parts around Durango, and the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang actors stayed at the Holiday Inn along the river. Once in a while we'd go down there and talk to them and sit in the bar, and they were the coolest dudes. Robert Redford, Katharine Ross, and Paul Newman turned out to be very, very small people. It's amazing what they were able to do with the camera.

I did have my brother's .30-06, on the chance that we might go hunting, and on occasion we did, never successfully. Trouble wanted to go hunting, so early one weekend morning we went out to Hesperus, south of Durango toward Cortez, where the old Fort Lewis fort was. That's where we went hunting. Plenty of deer, but the best thing to happen was that she got tangled up in the section fence that runs for 100 yards, and any living creature nearby would be gone. Really funny: big boots and a big hat that she had borrowed, probably from her dad. Just as well; it would've been my first

time killing something and gutting it, and that probably would not have been a very good way to show my manhood.

There was another time we had a party. We had a few slow gin parties, or Purple Passion parties. Bubby and Trouble and I played a lot of bridge together, and he and Teresa made a foursome with us on many nights playing bridge.

It was pretty common over around Cortez: if you put a particular pill in a beer or a drink, it would make the person pee red, thinking that they were peeing blood. Well, I did it to Bubby, and so I was watching him throughout the night to see what his reaction was going to be. Well, he knew all about the joke, because he had pulled it on other people himself. To reverse it all, he left the party, and the next day Trouble shared with me that she had run across Bubby and he was headed to Cortez, to the hospital. He was concerned about what was going on, so I got on the phone and started to call the Phillips residence on a regular basis, and of course Bubbles already knew about it, and she played along, so the phone wasn't being answered.

In the meantime, I'm getting more and more anxious, thinking that he's in the hospital or something's going on, and I've got to let him know. So, as Trouble stands by to control all of the situations that might take place, I tell her I'm going to drive over to make sure everything's OK, and then she told me the story. There again, mischievous people. She was the one who had told me about the prank.

Later on, for retaliation: I went home, again not sure whether the doors were ever locked or not, and in the bathroom, the bathtub was full of mashed potatoes. How many boxes of instant mashed potatoes does it take to fill half a bathtub? Now I wonder who this culprit was, and how did that person get in, if the doors were locked? It was kind of funny. How do you dispose of 25 pounds of mashed potatoes when it's already hardened? Should I stop now, or continue?

Mischief, you could see it in Trouble's eyes. We slid down School Hill, the back side of the college mesa, on lunch trays. Yeah, I had to pay for four or five of them that we broke: Trouble and Trouble Number 2, and I'm sure other friends.

She gave me a rose, a long-stemmed rose. Why? I don't know why. Was it because she loved me? She always hung on me. If only I could have that feeling again. I have a picture in my photo book of us standing there, and she always had her arm on my arm. Was it frustrating? As I look back on it now, absolutely not. I would have cherished that for the rest of my life.

Trouble, being on the cheer team, of course was very busy with that. There again, we were supposed to be going to school and getting an education and a degree. There were not too many places to go, but as often as we could, we would go to Mesa Verde, to the cliff dwellings. And when we did that, we would always stop in and see my second parents, Bubbles and Bucky, and of course Trouble's parents. Our lives were so full.

As I think about the world today, with all the distractions, how easy it was back then to be in love. It was just the two of us. Yes, we had friends and did things with our friends, but the time we had together was always spent communicating with one another, always sharing our hearts with one another. It was a private time, I think you could say, but it was easy, easy compared to what people are dealing with today, which has become so complicated. And it breaks my heart that even my sons, I'm afraid, will never know the true love that this young woman shared with me. Here again, I will thank my Lord.

My Best Game

She got to know my brother, because Denny would, as often as he could, fly down in a plane for a game and a weekend. He belonged to Piper Tri-Pacer, which was a flying club out of Arvada. I can vis-

ually remember, it appeared in my mind, that he and I had just pulled up in front of the house and were walking up toward the front enclosed porch, and flying out as the door swung open, here she comes, running out to greet us. Well, as it turned out, it was to greet my brother. She jumped right in the middle of his lap. She was anxious because her sister Corky, who had a boyfriend Trouble didn't like, was in town, and she wanted Denny to meet her. I'm pretty sure he took us out for dinner that night. He usually did. His friend Sonny flew with him a couple of times. Once they flew to Alamosa, to Adams State, for that game. And I'll be leading up to the best game that I ever played, as Paul Harvey always said on his radio broadcast: now let's get to the rest of the story.

I was very excited to get back to school, not only to start my junior year, which I can look back on now and say was my best year and my worst year (I'll explain why), but also to be able to be with Trouble for another anticipated wonderful year together. The school year started as usual: classes, work, football, trying to stay ahead of Trouble, which I found early on was not going to be possible, so I just received her love in her way. The season was going well. The team was playing well, and I'm on October 8, 1966, at Brooks Field in Golden, at the Mines stadium. It was a huge weekend for Fort Lewis and the Raider cheer team.

The band was invited to play at Bears Stadium at halftime of the Broncos game. So she was there, with Trouble Number 2. I have a picture of that in the picture book, on the bus, and yeah, playing cards in hand. My mom and dad were there, and some of the family and neighbors. It was going to be a great event.

I probably threw up, not surprisingly. We fell behind early, and at the half we were behind 23 to 7. At the start of the second half, probably because they did not pay a lot of attention to me in the first half, I was able to get free, and the quarterback found me, and we advanced the ball 55 yards after the defensive team had intercepted a pass two minutes earlier, and a 3-yard rush put us back

into the game. The momentum had changed. There's an article in the paper about it, for verification, for anybody who cares or even reads this. We ended up winning 33 to 29. Can you see why it was one of my best?

We always stayed at the Lamplighter hotel at 38th and I-70, and it was certainly close to where my parents and my brother, family, and friends were. They all were able to see Trouble cheer. As the team was showering and busing to the hotel, Brother and Trouble made arrangements. How she was able to clear it with her supervisor, I'm not sure, but she, Trouble Two, and, I believe, a third girl were able to leave the hotel, and Brother took them to his and his eventual brother-in-law's apartment. The fact was that if your family was in the immediate area, you could go home for the night, but my goodness. But I understand if you were to miss the bus the next morning... well, let's leave it at that. So I went home and spent the night, but was able to take Dad's car and meet the group for just a little bit, and then it was back on the bus the next morning.

Brother and Trouble had made arrangements to meet at halftime during the Broncos game; Denny and several friends had tickets. At halftime, after the presentation, they had managed to plan to meet somewhere on the field, and he hopped over the low fence that was there (if you remember, it was a baseball field), and they hugged, and then he was hurried and told to get back in the stands, which he did. But his comment to me was that he didn't have to buy another beer the rest of the game.

It was in the seventh game of my junior year that I had the hip pointer, which, there again, was very painful. It was hard to breathe. It was hard to walk. It was hard to talk sometimes, and it was very, very hard to sit on the toilet. I lay on my side. I did ultrasound with the trainer once a day, and then Trouble, as she could, when she could, would help me with ice packs.

Once again, one of my lovely friends had mentioned to me, "Ron, isn't that what you did back then? If you went to college, you looked for a career partner." And yes, that was the fact. After I met Trouble, I thought, and as I look back now, she may have been the one. Let's move on. I expected to find my life partner, whom I thought was she, thinking that we would hold hands and walk the paths of our lives together. She now will be 20 in June, and everything was going well, and then, as I had previously mentioned, the helmet to the hip laid me out pretty well and was, for a little while, hard to deal with.

That Christmas of 1965, she was going to spend the Christmas holiday with me and the family, and two or three days of it were supposed to be at the cabin. Part of the family was supposed to be there, and as it turned out, it did happen. I can remember the two of us in the little yellow Bug, driving through a terrible storm over Hoosier Pass. Thank God; thank You, Lord. I was told early on that my uncle was possibly going to go up and open the cabin for the time that was scheduled, so when Trouble and I got to Frisco and made our 10-cent phone call on a public phone to my brother, he wasn't able to let us know what was going to take place.

So, there again, having a little money in my checkbook paid off, because I booked a room at the Frisco Lodge, which is still there today. The next day or two we were in Denver with the folks, and then came the one weekend that I got stupid. That weekend we were at the cabin, and we had walked down to the Blue Spruce Inn, which is still up on Main Street, for some beers.

It was Trouble and me, my brother and a friend, and my cousin and her husband. We decided to leave with the girls and were walking back to the ranch. Two guys pulled up beside us, and one guy rolled down the driver's window and made some remarks, and yeah, I paid the price. I tried to smack him through the window, and I

ruptured a bursa sac in my wrist. Well, so much for me spending a lot of time with Trouble.

She left a little early in the week to spend time with cousins in Colorado Springs. More details will be explained about that week 60 years ago, and the picture that was sent that put this duck in a tailspin.

Thinking of the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs brings back the past once again, and Trouble was involved. The Christmas weekend at the cabin when I did the stupid thing and blew up my wrist curtailed plans for the rest of the week in Edgewater. To me, here was another time that was taken away from us. She went back to Colorado Springs early. She grew up in Colorado Springs and was very familiar with ice-skating, and she liked to do it. She brought her skates with her when we went for Christmas break, with anticipation of going down to Sloan's Lake, which every winter was cleared off by the marina and lit up for ice-skating. I could only imagine how graceful she was and would be on skates.

Our plan was to spend a couple of days with my folks and then go spend time in Colorado Springs. Our plan was to tell our parents that we were going to be at the other place, but instead we would rent a room for a few nights in the Springs so we could be alone and spend our first full Christmas and New Year together. She wanted to go to the Broadmoor and skate on one of the outside frozen ponds, which were lit up, and she also wanted me to see the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo all lit up for Christmastime. Once again, so much of the time that we had, as little as it seemed, was taken away from us.

The plan was then to go back to Edgewater to say farewell, and the two of us would drive back to start the new year with nothing but promises and dreams that never happened. She, like me, spent New Year's with our parents, and then she went on home with her parents, back to Cortez, for a week or so before school started. We had planned to have those two weeks by ourselves in Durango, just

two young lovers who wanted to be alone. I can envision her as a swan on a calm pond as she gracefully moves across the water; she did have a body so much like those of all the figure skaters that you see.

Parting Ways

Everything was, and could not have been, more perfect. She was like the restless wind. She was like the painted horse running through the meadows of my mind. And in the spring, with less than six weeks to go, she came to me and thought that she might be pregnant.

As I look back at it now, and the way my heart felt just a few months ago, as scared as I may have been, I believed and thought that we would be OK. Now, of course, with Vietnam in the back of most of our minds, coming up at some point in time anyway, in the near future, that was always something to consider. We didn't spend any time together during that time, and I hastened to see what kind of housing we might have in married student housing, where other students and young families lived. They had just added another eight or 10 married student housing units on the mountain, and yes, I could make that happen. My scholarship would cover my share, and I was making enough to cover other expenses. Two or three weeks went by as I pursued preparing our future. I had not told the Phillipses yet, but I knew that they would be there for our support.

And then, at spring football practice, I was in training, running across the field, going through a series of drills, and I kept falling down, and finally I fell down and stayed down. They took me to the clinic on campus, and I had a severe ear infection and tonsillitis. They could never take my tonsils out, because there was always an infection, so I just learned to live with it, but this time it sent me home three or four weeks before school was out, at which time I

had my tonsils removed. If only I could've had this done earlier in life, because I immediately started gaining weight. But then I may not have been as fleet-footed and able to get away as fast as I could, LOL.

During this time, Trouble did have her period, and nothing more was said until I had to address it, and I was headed home. As sick as I was, I must not have been very nice to her, and I wish I could re-live that moment. I know now that I was disappointed that Trouble was not to bear our child.

I had the surgery at St. Anthony's Hospital, and that was the same summer that Brother and I met those student nurses when we were water-skiing one afternoon, and, if you want to know, once again, Brother threw tennis balls at them while they were playing on the court. I will probably not be able to say often enough how much I miss my brother. We probably often say this: I wish that I had more time with that person. And I wish that was the case with all of those whom I've loved. As Paul Harvey would say, and this is the rest of the story: once again, with one phone in each of the homes, privacy was not really available, so we wrote letters for a couple of weeks into the summer.

Plans were made for Mike and me to leave our job with Pearl meter modern homes, on a framing crew, get off early on Friday, and head to Durango, to drop him off to be with his girl for the weekend. She was going to summer school, and I would go ahead and continue on to meet with Trouble to celebrate her 20th birthday. My brother, gracious as he always was, loaned me the Shelby Mustang, black with the gold stripe down it. You could not miss it.

As we were reaching Wolf Creek Pass, we saw a Colorado state patrolman coming the other way, and, anxious as we were to hopefully meet our ladies soon, we had to slow our pace down, smart enough to know that the state patrolman would probably go a distance, turn around, and follow us. That was the case, all the way to Pagosa Springs.

Now we were 45 minutes behind, but we had hoped to meet Mike's lady at a small place called Joe's on the south part of Main Street, and I was anxious to be able to see Trouble and work out the differences, which I thought were probably very few. I'm not sure that we ever did disagree. As I pulled out on Main Street, I hit the gas and fishtailed, not intentionally, I don't believe, but just anxious to get going.

Well, of course, a police officer was nearby. He pulled me over, not so far away that Mike didn't notice what had happened, and he stayed close. I was arrested for reckless, or careless, driving and locked up for the rest of the time, and the car was confiscated. Mike's dad was a Denver police detective. Mike was able to get a hold of his father, who called the Durango police department. There was also the little lady who owned the liquor store catty-corner from the house, whom we got to know very well. Her son was also a Durango police officer, and I knew him.

Well, after all was said and done, Mike was able to get hold of Trouble and cancel the plans that she had made. We were to spend the night with her folks, and if everything had gone as hoped, we would have been elsewhere on Saturday night. As it turned out, I got off with something very simple, if I recall, and paid a fine through the mail after I got home. I went back to work and spent the summer, which was full of my brother and water-skiing and working; that's probably a way of forgetting.

I chose not to work my last, senior year. I played football and had enough credits to leave after the fall semester. I don't know how I was able to graduate one trimester early; there again, I believe it was the fact that we were so busy that every minute, whether we were together or not, was full.

I will say one thing about Trouble, as I look at the little picture folder that I have created with pictures of her: her in her cheer outfit, as beautiful as she is; pictures taken at the cabin; and one at homecoming. The one at the cabin shows her mischievous eyes,

and there's the one where she's hanging on my arm, as always. But the one that's so endearing to my heart is the one on the front of the folder. It's a picture of her holding our adopted Mexican kids from Santa Rita, for the Christmas party that was held every year by the Lettermen's Club and the cheer team and other kids who wanted to be involved.

What we would do is adopt these kids, take them to the store, and let them pick out what they wanted. Then we would wrap it, and at Christmas we would have a party around the tree and invite them to come to the student union building. I have that picture of her because she was very much involved with this type of activity, and the American Red Cross was something she did early on in her young life. But that picture of her holding our adopted little boy and little girl, with the look that's upon her face, is the look that I'll always remember.

I'm going to stop now, because there's more to the story, but I have to catch my breath to tell how this story, 60 years later, I really feel had to be told. We parted ways.

I kept my room for the spring quarter, because I had hooked up with a couple of insurance salesmen with the College Master program, so I would go down on occasion, meet with them, and introduce them to other students. It was called being a bird dog. WOOF, WOOF! I would see her on occasion, and we would speak very cordially to one another, but never again were we going to be able to hold each other in each other's arms with dreams of a future together.

I've often had visions of that being the case: that we would be together, child or not, and I would go to Vietnam and survive the war, and I would come back to Durango, where I had already established a lifestyle. I had already become fairly well known in the community, and here in the last few months, as a dreamer, in my dream I saw myself there in Durango, in a much easier life, because, as I see it, it was already established. I could've possibly even

reached the level of assistant coach at the college. Only God knows, and He was with me all the way. She was like the restless wind; she was like the painted horse with such brilliant colors, running through the meadows of my mind.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Army and Coming Home

Selling Insurance and a Trip to Mexico

THAT SPRING I GOT an insurance license and sold a couple of College Master programs. A little side note: as I shared before, I had not officially graduated from college that last semester. I was selling insurance, and on one of my trips down with my agent, we decided that we would take a quick trip to Mexico. This was a late-afternoon decision: my good old friend Bubby and his lady, Teresa; Jim, my agent; and a girl by the name of Rosie Carter, who was the sister of June Carter, Johnny Cash's wife. You get the picture. We cashed checks at the VFW and drove to Nogales, Mexico, then took the train to a little place called Guaymas, a little ocean village, which is where we ended up. As the tide would come in during the evening, it would flood an area, leaving a kind of botanical garden atmosphere in the morning after the tide went back out. This area would be flooded, and there were fish and birds caught and captured in the water as it receded. It was really neat.

As we were traveling back, the federal manager of the marina, in an old woody station wagon, stopped and gave us a ride, and he asked us what we were up to. He was very considerate and very proud of his country. He asked us if we would want to be a part of a festival event that night; in fact, that's where he was headed. On this particular night, they honored those men who might be less desirable. They were men who were not very handsome; some were

deformed, some were crippled up, and they were all in the back of a cattle truck, and we, in the federal station wagon, were right behind the truck as we drove through the village, which was celebrating those not so fortunate. It really impressed us, and as I've shared more than one time, it will be an experience that I will always remember.

The Engineers

Through a man who served on a board with Dad, in one of his groups, and who was on the Selective Service board, the draft board showed us the way that I could join the Army, which I knew was coming within months anyway, and by joining, I could pick and choose what I wanted to do. I chose the engineers. I was not brave enough to jump out of airplanes, or even to fly, as my brother did or had the heart to do. My legs had gotten me through my life to this point, and I still had a lot of faith in them, so I wanted to stay on the ground. I was not a very good swimmer, and after watching Jaws I didn't want to be close to the water.

I spent October, November, December, and January at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in basic training. I had never been so cold in my life, and never will be again. Being a mountain man, I had never experienced humidity like that. I was shipped to Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana, where we learned that basic was a month and a half of how to kill an enemy and the rest of the time how to survive. What I learned in Indiana was how to operate equipment, and my big love was running the heavy, heavy equipment.

And now I'd got my second stripe. Corporal. Some advantages came with that. I was older, and most of the guys who were drafted were right out of high school, and there were some benefits in that, which may have made it a little easier. Most of the time, at the end

of my two years, I ended up driving the lieutenant or the captain around in a jeep.

I never made it to Vietnam. At times I'm sorry I didn't get to experience that, but I praise God that neither my brother nor I brought pain and misery to our parents, as we would have if anything had ever happened to us or if we had been damaged in any way. Thank You, Jesus.

Coming Home

I spent my last three months of regular Army at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, which was once again a God-given blessing. Mom at that time had suffered dearly with arthritis. She had gone through having both her breasts removed, and yet to come was having both knees replaced. Yes, it was a difficult time for Mom and Dad both, and because I was stationed at Fort Carson in those three months, there were a couple of weekends I was able to get off on leave and be in the house. Never, ever once did I see my mother complain, even as I look back now. She hurt for so much of her life. She had the Lumberg stomach, like both her brothers, one of whom had part of his stomach removed. With ulcers and all the other hardships placed on my dear mother, I never once saw her complain.

I had two years to serve in the Reserve, like my brother, who was pulling his Reserve duty at the Federal Center in Lakewood. He was assigned as a drill sergeant, which meant he kept everybody else in order. He was spit-polished, which means his brass and his boots shone as if they were pieces of glass. He always made a uniform look better than it was. He would've been a super example in an airline pilot's uniform. I will always remember my brother as we go through this text.

I was thinking I would get back into selling insurance, but I had one of the best jobs I've ever had, which was reading meters with

Public Service. Very simple: you would get a book for an area, and if you could read it and go from house to house in three hours, you were done. If you took your 10 hours, you were in trouble. I always loved to get out and walk, and so it was sometimes a real treat, and I got paid for it as well.

There was one time I had a short day, and I went to see Mom and have lunch with her. As I went in the back door, as we always did, and rounded the corner from the kitchen and dining room into the living room, I yelled to Mom, "How are you?" She had been lying down, so I sat in the chair by the corner, waiting for her to come around from the hallway, and there she was, whistling, showing me that everything was OK, even though I know that she was hurting because of all the pain she had endured.

That Christmas I called the boys' mother, as we often did, and invited her to come to the house, where we always had a Christmas party. She accepted, and from that time on we started to date, and, unexpectedly, prepared for the trip to Summit County, where I would spend the rest of my life.

PART TWO

Summit County

CHAPTER FIVE

Coming to Summit County

ANNE AND I WERE married in 1969, and in 1970 we were at the cabin with Denny and Annie, snowmobiling, when I got a phone call at the cabin. Early on, we had a phone installed when it was available. The call was from a previous Edgewater neighbor, a painter, who had moved his family of seven kids and settled in Frisco to work on a condominium project at the edge of Lake Dillon. The builder, from Lakewood, had built three of the condominium buildings, and at that point was required to hire a property manager while the next two buildings and the clubhouse were built. I was asked if I would be interested. Sure, why not? I'll check it out. I met with the builder and his partner, and we visited a couple of times.

Interestingly enough, we were offered the job. I had not talked to Anne, but why not? We were just starting out in Aurora, and there was not a whole lot of future there. We talked it over and took the job. I gave Public Service two months' notice, and in the latter part of February, I moved to Dillon.

At that time, the total population of the county was fewer than 2,400 people. I commuted every weekend over Loveland Pass, or Anne came up as often as she could. I slept in a lock-off in Building C of the condominiums and spent a lot of time in the construction trailer, figuring out what our job would require.

We formed our own company, Mountain Management. After the school year ended and Anne moved up, we both got our real estate licenses. We felt as though we were standing at the beginning of a

new and exciting career. Keystone was brand new and owned by the Ralston Purina Company. They needed bedrooms to support the ski area until their own development could begin. We created our own brochure at the association's expense and flew to Kansas City for a Frontier Airlines ski show. Rental business began coming in. We received a percentage of the rentals, along with a monthly fee for each condominium as it came online.

We did not have much need to travel. Maybe we would go across the dam road to Frisco or to the cabin. Little John's Pizza was right across the street, along with the post office, drugstore, and little grocery store. I did buy a used pickup, which got me around as well as anything. Two or three years later, my good friend and brother by another mother, Terry, moved up with his brother and his wife. They operated Farmers Corner on the other side of the lake, on the way to Breckenridge. When it was safe, we would snowmobile across the lake.

Finding Christ

Property management required us to cover the project almost all the time. On Sundays, we would put a sign on the door that said, "Gone to church," and close for a few hours. Dillon Community Church was a Village Missions church with many traveling pastors. One Sunday, a pastor named Zawicki was visiting. At the end of the morning service, he asked if he could come by and visit us. Certainly. That night, he came over, and I knelt down beside our orange and yellow couch and, for sure, accepted Christ as my Savior. My life did change. We listened to tapes and went to a conference at Oral Roberts University with my brother-in-law and sister-in-law. I was baptized at the church wearing my old Dillon Inn softball shirt. I had played for the Dillon Inn during a couple of summers while Anne was at Western State working on her master's degree. As I have mentioned before, I walked many different paths, but

when I look back over my life, Christ, the Son of the living God, had His hand on my shoulder.

CHAPTER SIX

Building a Life at 9,206 Feet

NOW, ON TO SUMMIT County and the life at 9,206 feet. In the first four years, we had accomplished quite a bit. I turned out to be the vice president of the Optimist Club. We did the first winter carnival for the town of Dillon, where we had dog sled teams on the lake and broomball courts, and several teams from throughout the county participated, and the dog sled teams came in from the events that were always held annually at Leadville.

We had left the condominium project and were renting a house up in the Tenderfoot addition when I went to work for a contractor who was going to build the brand-new prestressed building, which still exists today as the La Riva Del Lago building, to include a bowling alley, the theater, and the expansion of the supermarket for the owners of the building. There was Summit Super in Dillon, B&L Market in Frisco, and Fox Groceries in Breckenridge. Yes, there was a Safeway in Leadville, yes, a Safeway in Idaho Springs, but it was very common to make at least one trip a month to see the folks, of course, but also to shop at Target on West Colfax and the day-old bakery on West Colfax. You would often see some county people there, especially at Target, where you'd be buying your underwear and all of those goods.

At this time, Anne had decided that she wanted to go back and teach, and she was hired the day she walked in. She was teaching history and social studies, and her first year she was the assistant girls' basketball coach.

The Town Board and the Amphitheater

So, as I was working for the new big project, I was also asked to fill a position on the town board for just a couple of months, until election time in April. I chose to get my feet wet, and I was somewhat familiar with politics because of everything my father, cousin, and uncle had been involved with in their lives in Edgewater and Jefferson County.

I said I would serve, and I was reelected for a four-year term, at which time I was self-appointed park commissioner. We created three pocket parks, which over the last several years were sold off for commercial value. We developed the baseball field, thanks to a couple who had lost their son, a very competitive athlete, in a car accident; the family donated the scoreboard. We also developed a very primitive Dillon Amphitheater, purely a bowl carved out to help build the dam. What we did was level off several different elevated locations and put in a staircase from top to bottom, and a very primitive stage, no backdrop, and that was the beginning of today's Dillon Amphitheater, which has become so well known as a venue over the last several years. I was a part of that; probably most of it was my idea.

The Bowling Alley That Almost Was

Anne taught for a couple of years, and then she and another teacher, whose husband was a vice president of the new bank in Frisco called Summit County Bank, went to Western State for two summers to work on their master's degrees. Those two years, I played softball for the old Dillon Inn, and, as I mentioned, that's the shirt I wore at my water baptism after I received Christ as my Savior and my Lord.

During this time, knowing about the new development, I asked the owners of the project, the folks who owned Summit Super, if

they had anyone interested in the bowling alley, and no, so I talked to Denny and Dad, and we created a small partnership and got permission to go ahead and be the owners of the bowling alley, and we would be responsible for installing all of the equipment, which would be ours. It seemed so exciting, with so much potential for the future. We had already set up breakfast leagues and moonlight bowling, and the six-lane bowling alley in the Breckenridge Lodge was going to shut down after we opened. There was a bowling alley in Leadville, so there was always a lot of interest in the game.

About this time, City Market decided to build a new shopping center, to include a City Market, down in the new development of Dillon, right off the highway, close to where our gas station and restaurant was located. Well, because of this, the Summit Super project in Dillon shut down. The owners would not be able to compete with City Market, so all of the other plans went out the door. I had flown to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to look at Brunswick equipment that had been returned from Japan. There had been a great influx of bowling alleys over there, and a lot of those bowling alleys closed down before they even opened, and a lot of that equipment was returned to the U.S. and stored in tobacco sheds, where I went and looked at it, and we were going to be able to buy it at 10 cents on the dollar and have it installed by local tradesmen.

So that was the first of many stories I'm going to share about being there at the beginning, being able to get established and ride out the growth in the county.

The Dillon Valley House

At this point, we chose to give up our real estate business, the property management business, and now the bowling alley business. Shortly after this is when I hooked up with Bill, our neighbor, who came from Oklahoma with his family, two adopted sons and

one by their marriage, to build the Ramada Inn in Silverthorne. They became our neighbors, with the sheriff's house in between.

In the meantime, I started building a home in Dillon Valley. With my excavation experience and the use of my friend's backhoe (the electrician I did work for, running trench for him), I dug the foundation and poured the footers, using what was called a foam-form foundation block, which was so easy that even the kids were able to pick the blocks up and install them, stacking them like Lego blocks, lay the rebar horizontally on straps, and pour an 8-inch wall. I tried to get the franchise on the product, but another builder was able to get it before me.

Because there was very little lumber in the area at that time (QM Woods, on Colfax in Lakewood, was the nearest), the boys and I would often take that long, long trip back home carrying just barely enough. I saw a product called Miles Homes, where they would provide every part of building a home. It was a tri-level home, and it really turned out nice as I built it. They would ship the materials: framing, drywall, roofing, paint, etc. Basically, the majority of the components the construction required.

I would nail together what I could during the week, and if I had enough built, I would have some of the help come over, and we would stand the walls, and I would pay them with a six-pack of beer and dinner, I'm sure. The guys' names, or nicknames, were Chic, Zeke, Ollie, and Peter!

We paid $10,000 for a beautiful lot that backed up to the National Forest land, where they sometimes kept their horses. Just down the hill was Straight Creek, where the river flowed 24/7, and there were beaver ponds, where the boys and I would go out before dark and throw rocks in the pond, and the beavers would rise up to see what the commotion was. The yard was big enough that when the boys got into skateboarding, we built a half-pipe for them to skate on with their friends. In the wintertime, after Lisa had given the boys her little Kitty Cat, we were able to have a circle path

around the back of the yard for the boys to try out the machine. The yard was big enough that we could play catch and do any other thing you might want to do as a kid and a father.

H&D Construction and the Spare Tire

H&D Construction was created, along with the Spare Tire restaurant, and because of my partner's early experience, we were going to be able to do quite a bit of work as Keystone Mountain developed. In the meantime, through the new owner of the Summit County Bank, a Kansas farm banker, and the vice president I mentioned, whose wife had gone with Anne for further education at Western State, we were able to get a contract on a project that still exists on Corinthian Hill. It was called, and is called, Columbine Condos: five buildings of six units. It was financed by the owner of the bank, who was the developer. Back then, by having a contract, we took it to the bank, which was the developer, and with that contract we were able to borrow money to do the job. I'm not sure that would be acceptable today.

Then, at the same time or shortly after, we were able to build what was called the Sporting House, which was a ski shop owned by two partners who moved from Old Town to New Town, and there was an Italian restaurant in the lower level. They just recently tore that building down, a couple of years ago, and replaced it with a new sports facility.

Things were looking very favorable at this time, until my partner's marriage fell apart. He went through some very hard times, finally moved away, and eventually died at a very young age, 54. He and I used to sit around and slap our knees and say, "My goodness, if we'd known we were going to live this long, we would've taken better care of ourselves." It was no laughing matter, now that I think about it.

Well, this is when Ron Drake & Company continued on in the business of construction, now adding to the list of things that could've happened with connections, but because of an unfaithfulness, this part of our life would change, as it has.

Anne went on to take over as head coach of the girls' basketball team and had several years of very successful teams. One year they were able to go to State, and it was a sight to see when these gorgeous young ladies would come out on the basketball court. If they were at home, the band would be playing "Sweet Georgia Brown," and they all had garters on their legs as they warmed up. It was the coolest thing ever. This was the time, or one of the times, that she got her heel clipped at practice and was running back and forth because of the Achilles tendon tear, when she encountered the angel that morning on the hill going into Silver Plume, a story I will share later.

The house was completed in Dillon Valley, and it became our permanent residence. Of course, we went back and forth to the cabin, checking on it; when Mom and Dad were up for the summer, they would be over there. I even had a couple of school parties there with the new friends we had met through teaching.

Adam

OK. Adam was born in July 1978, and his first home was the cabin. He had a difficult birth. He had a black-and-blue head from trying to get out as soon as he possibly could, and he had a twisted foot. There was a solution to that: they were able to put him in a cast that was changed weekly, and we would run to Denver to Children's Hospital. This went on for just a little less than a year. I remember, as if it were yesterday, sitting in front of the boiler room, holding him in a pail of water to soak the cast on a Sunday night before a Monday trip to Denver. It scared him when they used the saw to cut off the cast, so we just soaked it the night before. Supposedly that

twisted foot would have made a difference in his abilities, but he proved to be a very good athlete, a supreme athlete, so much like his brother would be.

CHAPTER SEVEN

His Hand on My Shoulder

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS AT Dillon Community Church, there was a new church called the Abundant Life Church, which was having services at the Ramada Inn on Sunday nights while they were building a church in Silverthorne. Three or four of our families started going to the evening services, and it being such a faith-believing ministry, we eventually started attending full-time once the physical church was built. A wonderful, wonderful pastor and wife, and three sons, young men; they were over just a short period of time.

A bus ministry was created, where we would drive the bus to Summit Cove and the Keystone area, pick up kids, bring them back for Sunday school, and then take them back to their drop-offs. There was tremendous growth across the county at that time, and there were times when several different churches came together at the amphitheater and had a weekend crusade.

And then there was the Jean Sullivan ministry, the Evel Knievel for Jesus, who jumped through fiery hoops on his motorcycle. We held an event on Main Street in Dillon, which drew a good crowd for that time. Jean stayed with us often, and because people wanted to support his ministry, even though he traveled and really didn't have a home base at that time, we convinced him that we would open up a post office box for him in Dillon. We took care of that, and as support came in, we were able to get it to him.

There was Women's Aglow, a women's Christian group that became very active throughout the county. The owner of the A&W in

Frisco was a Jewish man, a Messianic Jew, that is, a Jew who believes in Jesus Christ as the Savior and the living God. Ruben was his name, and on Wednesday mornings we would have a men's Bible study. Ruben sold the A&W a few years after that and then actually moved to Israel with his wife. Dad and I would attend on Wednesdays with some other brothers and Ruben, and it was really a great fellowship.

It was during that time that I believe the Holy Spirit gave me... I know the Holy Spirit gave me "The Void," the poem that I wrote. As I'm able to look back throughout my life, I can, yes, time and time again be reminded that on the path I walked, I was not alone.

One Sunday night, Mom and Dad, who attended the church as often as they could, answered the call, and they went down the aisle and both accepted Christ as their living, loving God. So, as I mentioned early on in the text about going to church every Sunday, we were not, I believe, saved at that time. I praise God that Mom and Dad, my brother, his wife, my wife, and my sons all know Jesus.

Shortly after that, Dad went back down to church in Edgewater and shared his heart and the Holy Spirit with the congregation, and as it turned out, he was not very well received. Dad loved the Lord. He lived the Lord. After Mom died, he moved up and got a job at Walmart as a greeter, shortly after they opened, and he was honored so many times as Employee of the Month. But I make it very clear: Dad shared Jesus Christ at Walmart. Sam Walton flew in on his own plane, which he flew himself, to the Leadville airfield, and then drove over and was there for the grand opening, and Dad actually was able to meet him and shake his hand.

As I say, my time is running out, but I still believe that, even though my plans did not work out, I strove, as you will hear next in this history of my time and this account of what was accomplished. I have been a blessed man, but I'm tired of growing weak. My wonderful life is behind me, and I look forward to being with all of those who have gone before me, celebrating, soaking in all of God's love,

and no more pain, no more sorrow, no more backache, no more restless nights. I'm looking forward more than ever to the kingdom. Amen.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Whatever It Took

WE WERE LIVING IN the county, surviving, pursuing one opportunity after another. Work was not as readily available as it is today here in the county. So we did whatever it took to make a start: some work on a couple of homes that were factory built and brought in by a member of our church. That was my connection. It wasn't too much longer before we went ahead and started doing those on our own, which included Denny and Dad and me.

Dad had met a charming lady who was square dancing, and she had a lot of money to invest, so we worked out a deal with her: she would buy properties for us to build on, and we would put a factory home on each one, and she had a friend who was a Realtor who could sell it. And then she would share in the profit, along with payment back on the real estate she purchased. This worked out really well. We built three homes out at Summit Cove using the same foundation I mentioned for our Dillon Valley home, doing most everything ourselves other than setting the home and "stitching it together," as they would say in the industry.

We had plans to do a triplex in Frisco called Mount Royal, and after we sent off a deposit of $100,000 to the supplier in Utah, it wasn't too much longer before the company declared bankruptcy, taking our money. We went to Utah and visited an attorney and found out that we would spend more money and not get anything back for our efforts, so we paid off $10,000 a year over 10 years, plus the interest. Another setback, another good thing that could

possibly have gone right. We had all the units sold, so we were required to supply a product. So, in turn, we went to another manufactured-home company, out of Nebraska, to finish the triplex. It's still standing. It still shines. It still looks very nice.

April Lynn and Luke

Adam was about two years old when his mother miscarried a little girl. Her name was to be April Lynn, named after the month she was going to be born and in honor of her Aunt Lynn. She would've been so beautiful, so athletic, so spoiled, and she would've been her daddy's little girl. I've been told there's nothing like the love between a father and a daughter. I have very few regrets, but that would be one: not to spoil and raise a little girl and watch her become a star basketball player. She would've had my legs, so she'd probably have been pretty good at track, and of course she would've been the prom queen. I can only imagine.

As the years went by, I was in the construction business and teaching and coaching, and along the way, Luke was born, in December 1981. By the pictures, he had a smile that would steal your heart, and I miss that. The boys grew up going to Dillon Valley Elementary, within walking distance, but prior to those days they had a babysitter in Dillon Valley. Her husband worked at the school and was the athletic director, and their three boys and a girl were always around to help raise my two little brats. When the boys were older, they were more interested in snowboarding, which was at the beginning of the new sport, so of course they had to have the gear. Because of the skills, they were also very interested in skateboarding, the same type of skill, so they were very interested in pursuing that, which they did, once again as front-runners. In elementary school, on Wednesdays during the winter, the kids would get out half a day to ski at the ski areas, and the parents could meet them

and participate, which I often did. The last time I ever skied was with the boys.

Coaching

One gift I recognized early in my life was the gift of encouragement. More than anything, I think that helped me become a good coach, one who was recognized over time, and I thank God for that. When the boys got older, as I mentioned early on, I had the desire to coach, and I was able to coach both boys in baseball.

My partner introduced the T-ball program, and by doing so, we brought it into the county and made the T-ball stands out of PVC pipe with plywood bases. A neighbor was also able to coach a sponsored Lions Club football team, the first of its kind in the county, and Adam was able to play on that team. There's an article in the paper about my success as a middle school head football coach, so I will not expand a whole lot, other than the fact that I was blessed to take over the program halfway through after its inaugural season, and for 13 or 14 years I coached the teams. The newspaper article from when I resigned after those years will explain what took place and why. Over the years I coached, I suspect that I had between 1,800 and 2,000 kids under my wing. I was the one mostly blessed from that.

On Our Own

The boys' mother and I were married for 19 years. Anne started a driver's training school under the direction of a metro program, and over a period of time, with her lack of luster for Summit County, she chose to move back to Jefferson County and start a new life. So the boys were shipped back and forth for a few years, with the final choice left to them when they turned 13, of where they would choose to be. That was the case with Adam, and then Luke also

chose to be in the county. It wasn't so much about being with me as it was being back with what they knew most. It was difficult. Whomever they were staying with that year, we would travel and meet at Idaho Springs every other weekend when possible, and once again make the delivery on Sunday.

After four or five years in Denver, Anne chose to move to the mountains, to Kremmling, where she held down several jobs over a period of time. She was very well loved over there by so many; it was what Summit County had been early on. Later in life, Luke would be with her at least one day a week, sometimes two, and take her around to the different things that needed to be done, and often on the holidays we would all be together. Neither one of us used the boys as a pawn, and we were able to be civil and share time together as a family.

Living in the Dillon Valley house by myself, I was able to rent out two rooms to a couple of young ladies who were working at the Dillon day care, who inspired me to get out and live again, and, for sure, to cut off my mustache. They said it made me look old, and I did what the girls told me to do, and they were right. I changed my whole attitude. I did not hang out in the bars, so when the boys were not with me, I was pretty much alone. I always had a good and faithful dog, and each one of them helped provide love and comfort.

CHAPTER NINE

Dancing, Hunting, and Dinner in the Woods

MOM DIED IN 1983, and a couple of years later Dad sold off the place in Edgewater, moved up to Drake Haven full-time, and shortly after that got a job as a greeter at Walmart, which had just opened. Dad was well known for his smile and his love for God, and he shared it as a greeter, and he was such an influential man in the community. He loved to square dance, so that was his social outlet, and everyone loved him.

I myself loved country dancing, and about that time I took it up, with some friends who encouraged me and who were teaching classes at Keystone, and I became pretty good on my feet. I told the boys, "If you can country swing, you'll always have somebody to dance with," and that was the case. I could get the ladies around the floor pretty gracefully, and because of that, I spent over 20 years of my single life country dancing.

There were some guys from the church with whom I hunted for a few years. One of my friends had two mules and two horses, which provided the means of getting in and out of our deep-woods hunting camps. There were four of us, and we were often asked if others could be a part, and the answer was no. The four of us got along so well and knew what to expect, and we did not want any of that to change. It was a great time of fellowship. We didn't always get our animal, but we were in God's creation.

I was married a second time, for 10 or 11 years, during which we were able to accomplish a lot. We had a business on Main Street; we were able to take some fun vacations, have a timeshare in Puerto Vallarta, and travel, all six of us, and we had some great times during part of that time. This was all made possible by the Beanie Baby boom, when we were able to cash in on the three-year craziness. As mentioned before, this was when we were doing the factory-built projects, once again another opportunity where the door was slammed closed through no fault of our own.

Dinner in the Woods

Of course, always looking for something to do, I helped and worked for a man and a woman who were going to the church. He was a five-star chef, and she played the violin, both very talented, with two children. They started a business called Dinner in the Woods, where you would take guests in a horse-drawn sleigh to a tent, where they would be served a full-course dinner in the evening under oil-lit chandeliers, with entertainment. I helped them for two years, on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays during the winter, and during those times when the boys were with me, they knew where the cash box was, and there was a telephone in the tent that I could call to make sure that they were behaving. Today I might be in jail, but they were good boys and very responsible, even at a very young age. They would order a pizza once in a while and have it delivered, and that's why they knew where the money box was.

As I mentioned before, never did we have to ask if their homework was done; they were responsible young boys. There's a picture book that shows them and Dad working with me later on.

The folks who had put Dinner in the Woods together had an opportunity to go down to a property in Kremmling to manage a whole resort, which they did, and that allowed me to take over the operation of Dinner in the Woods, which for the next three years

was very positive. It was a lot of fun to do, and the money was rewarding. Dad helped me in the kitchen, and there are pictures of that in the picture book, and there's a picture of the boys on the horse-drawn sleigh.

It was going really well. In fact, it was going so well that Copper Mountain did not renew the lease on the property there at Union Creek, where the two tents were set up. One was the cook tent, where I had the food, prepared ahead by a friend of ours who had a restaurant in Silverthorne called Patty's. The menu consisted of Rocky Mountain trout stuffed with crabmeat, green salad, and dessert, of course, or prime rib with all the fixings. We had music and entertainment by a friend of mine who played the guitar and also waited tables, and my future brother-in-law also waited tables.

Well, another bummer. This opportunity was taken away from us, another very successful opportunity. We had a lot of fun, and it kept us busy. If you wonder, and if you ever read this text to its completion, you'll see that I had very little spare time from early on, from mowing lawns to my college experience to all of the other involvement, from the town board, the chamber of commerce, football, and church. I was not made to stand still, nor was my grandfather, nor was my father.

Behind the Wheel

Through a dance connection, I was able to drive a van to Black Hawk for a company called Aces and Eights, after gambling had opened up, from Summit County in the evenings during the winter. I did this for two years, and then I also had a job driving vans out of Breckenridge, which would take people from the county to the airport and pick up airport travelers bound for Summit County. I would do the morning shift, and my day usually would be over by 12 or 1 o'clock in the afternoon, and the tips at both were very good.

I did the airport run early in the morning. I usually had guests headed down the mountain by 6:30 or seven to catch a morning flight, and then I would bring folks back, deliver them, and be through by noon or 1 o'clock. I loved it, another part of my life.

I also drove to Central City with a company called Aces and Eights, where we would pick up folks, usually at the Holiday Inn, and take them to Central City or Black Hawk, early on, when, if you recall, they became legal places for gambling. Those were night trips. There again, I loved doing that. I had more fun, and I got tipped well. I always left my cowboy hat upside down. And thank You, Lord, because I was responsible many times for the safety of the guests I was driving around.

CHAPTER TEN

Serving Summit County

WHILE IN DILLON VALLEY, I served on a joint authority board, the San District, with the town of Dillon and the town of Silverthorne, and for my most recent, last 26 years, I've served as president of the Frisco Sanitation board. I've signed over millions and millions of dollars in checks and payroll and payments, and I can honestly say I hardly have another signature left in my right hand. All of these parts that I've shared, and all of these opportunities that I've had in Summit County, have just blessed me to no end.

I chaired the local Red Cross chapter in Dillon and was awarded the new volunteer of the year, and I had an opportunity to go to the Governor's Mansion for dinner with our Red Cross community advisor.

One summer we had a fake disaster planned at Keystone. It was to be an event in which a huge windstorm came through and blew tents and people around the parking lot. We, with the Red Cross connection, and the county manager were part of this experiment, because of what was learned over the years from the events that brought so many people to the county, like the fireworks at the lake for 20 years, and events such as the barbecue challenge on Frisco's Main Street, which drew so many people that the county's emergency system was not capable of handling any huge catastrophe-type situation. Like I mentioned, there were fewer than 2,400 people here back when we moved in 1970; today, if all the beds are filled

throughout the county, there are between 110,000 and 120,000 people. Quite a change.

Ron Drake & Company

During a period of time, along with Ron Drake & Company, which was sometimes, and most of the time, just a one-man operation until the boys got a little bit older, I also worked for Bighorn Materials, which was the lumberyard in Frisco; Overhead Door, which of course was the garage door company; and Frisco Fireplace, which of course was the Frisco fireplace supplier. All of these were, of course, construction related, but they were sales positions. They were all salaried, even though sometimes on a weekend or at night I might have a little job that I could go ahead and pick up. I built a cedar log home above Silverthorne, and the doctor and his ex were not able to finish payment, so I put together a plan, sold my house on my own, and moved into the house that we had built for a short time, to work off what was left of the payment owed to me during that time.

Whispering Pines

After Brother and my sister-in-law sold their business, they were trying to retire. It was so difficult for them as well. We had an opportunity to buy into a brand-new development over by Keystone called Whispering Pines. Three beautiful lots were purchased by Brother, and we started and built a log home of 5,000 square feet, with a private theater in the lower level, a steam bath and steam unit, and a huge garage, with Keystone 2 miles away. Guess what happened? 2008, 2009: the economy went flat, and nothing was happening. The 2008 Olympics brought around a young man, an Olympic medalist from Vermont, who purchased the log home. He and his buddies lived there for a while as they were training or trav-

eling, and once in a while I'd get a call to go over and check on something for them, which I did. Today that property would sell for $4 million, I would imagine. The two other lots were finally sold rather than built on. We did have plans for one of them, but that was another thing that didn't quite work out. Brother and my sister-in-law had so much fun, and were occupied, and it was such a beautiful home after it was completed.

A *Full Life*

Have I had a full life? Oh, absolutely, absolutely, no doubt about it. God's protection all the way, over the years. I have spent more time here at Drake Haven than any member of the family, and with my 81st birthday coming up, I find myself with not much future left, but what a past I have had. The things I've been able to accomplish in my life are unbelievable. Where did the time go? Well, that's all pretty much in this text. I have been blessed with good health most of my life, but my body is paying the price, and why shouldn't it? It has held together beyond its warranty.

I'm going to close this part now, and I will be talking about individuals: my sons, the history of Drake Haven, etc.

PART THREE

Family, Faith, and the Haven

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Mom and Dad

THIS MORNING, AS I always do, I said good morning to Jesus, to Mom and Dad, and to Denny. I'm thinking about Mom once again. My last trip home from college was just a little bit before Christmastime. There was a truck transporting Christmas items that went off the road close to Pagosa Springs, on the Wolf Creek Pass side. The freight company called Coach to see if he could put together some players, or guys who would be interested in helping unload and transfer goods, and of course, here was the opportunity to make a little more money, which I did. We were able to take some items that were not destroyed, so I took the opportunity and brought home four decorative pillows for Mom's couch. And we got paid in cash, so when I got home, I was able to buy Mom a bottle of her favorite fragrance. She loved lilac, and along 25th Street in Edgewater, at the house, there was a whole line of lilacs, purple and white bushes. What a fragrance they would put off in the summer. Love you, Mama.

It was the 1st of August, and the celebration of Colorado Day brought back memories of my father and me going to the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs for the state convention. I was a board member representing the town of Dillon, and he was a longtime trustee for the town of Edgewater. Dad designed the Edgewater seal, which still stands today. We had planned the trip so we had rooms next to each other, and my father, the distinguished

man that he was, a people person... I know he enjoyed that weekend as much as I'm enjoying thinking of it this morning.

Mom had two brothers who survived to adulthood, and three siblings who died before five years of age. Two were girls, and Artie, the boy, lived to be five years old and died of diphtheria. Dad was an only child, and he was a miracle, according to Grandma, and I know he was a miracle. Grandma was thrown from a buggy at 16 years old and had a kidney dislodged and was told that childbearing would not be possible. Mom was of big stature; her mom and dad were healthy and big people. Dad's mom and dad were very small, and I thank God that Dad turned out to be the big man that he was, in between Mom and Dad. My brother and I and my sons have grown to be men of good size. Thank You, Lord.

CHAPTER TWELVE

My Brother, Denny

NOW I MUST TALK about my brother. As I shared at his memorial, what a self-made man he was, of course under God's protection and guidance, though not always recognized. I know Denny grew up most of his young life with asthma. Because of that, he was not out running around like most kids his age, and of course back then they didn't have all the devices to make breathing easy, so a lot of the time he was self-entertaining, and let's face it, anybody who knew him knew what a mind he had.

So, after I was born and grew into a pair of shoes, we became pretty good buddies. I remember we didn't have a Walmart to go buy toys, nor did we have the money. So in Mom's beautiful backyard, with its two levels, we would string two hoses together to create a track as long as the hoses, 50 feet maybe, and we would roll marbles down it, with curves and ups and downs, and when a marble would roll off, an adjustment was made. He was quite an engineer already.

We shared a bedroom down in the basement, with model planes that he had built hanging from strings, and a cabinet full of ships, so this is how he spent his early years. We were into trains then, and Dad always had a train around the Christmas tree every year, after we had gone up to Idaho Springs and cut our own tree. We had the little narrow gauge and all different sizes. Brother was trying to convince Dad that we should build a plywood platform where we could put our track and build a village, and be able to pull it up and

have it suspended from the rafters in the garage. He had it figured out that each corner would have a pulley, and we would be able to pull it up when the car had to be there; otherwise, we could drop it down when we wanted to play. Well, Dad was pretty creative himself, but this was something he was not going to buy into.

Early on, Brother would tear down a lawnmower and make a go-kart out of it. I know that didn't get very far either, if I recall, but I think you can understand where I'm going about Brother and his own ability to be creative and think, maybe, outside the box. Of course, that was the case.

He grew out of the asthma as he entered middle school age (I know because I asked him), when he started being more out in the social world, and he had some great friends all through high school and into his life. He was number 80 on the football field, even though football was not a big thing like it is today. Of course, I would play football.

I'm Denny Drake's little brother. As we grew up, of course, there were times of success and times of failure, and I'm sure it was a wonderful life, because I was the Duck's little brother. I did have favor as I moved into high school, with the seniors and juniors who were two and three years behind my brother's class. Yes, it did make things a lot easier, being the Duck's little brother; that was also the case with Luke and Adam. Mom and Dad were wonderful parents and providers.

Denny fell in love with a young girl early on. Even then she was so much a part of the family, because of the relationships between her family and our family. Brother should've been in her class, a year behind, but he was one of the youngest in his class, and that was the case with me too.

Brother was on the 1959 All-State basketball team from Edgewater. It was the same team that Harry was on, the one who opened the door for me at Fort Lewis and my football career.

Brother always made a joke, and we always reminded him of this, that the coach did not really favor him, even though he was like the sixth or seventh player on the squad. But he was selected by his peers to be the captain of the team. Can you imagine? But the coach did not approve of that, so the coach appointed another guy, and Brother was co-captain. Now, might there be a reason that the coach did not like Brother so much? Even though, there again, through the church and through the community, everybody knew everybody. At one of the practices, Brother farted, and it was during one of the coach's talks. Angry, the coach said, "Drake, did you fluff?" and Brother's answer to that was, "Not on purpose, Coach."

Dad did put up a basketball hoop on the end of the garage and poured a slab, so there was an opportunity to play basketball. The back porch was a concrete porch, 3 feet high, so that is where I would play baseball by myself, throwing a durable rubber ball from Gates Rubber Company against the concrete and gloving it. Very few times did I hit the screen door, and when I did, I heard about it.

Brother hung a bag out from the basketball support and used it as a punching bag. It was more of a body bag, about 30 pounds. He had some leather work gloves with tape wrapped around them, and he would work out hard on that old bag. He and a friend joined a gym in North Denver and worked out there pretty consistently in the latter part of his high school years and one year into college. No lady in his life, only dreams.

Brother was one of the top in his class and was accepted to CSU, which he attended for one year, and after that year, I think he decided that he had taught the professors all that they would have him teach them, so he chose not to go back to school, and he was trying to find his niche. He got a job at National Tea, which was a meat processing plant down on Brighton Boulevard, under the viaduct.

He worked there for a short time and then decided that Uncle Sam was knocking at the door and that he would see if he could get in and fly helicopters for the Army. I remember the fall morning, bright and early, when I drove him down in the 1949 Ford that he had worked to refurbish (pictures in a newspaper article about it can be found), and with a hug, I'm sure, he handed the keys over to me, and I did not see him again until that next Christmas. Dad, of course, was headed to work, and Mom, of course, did not have the heart, nor would we even ask her, to take him to the airport. Sorry, I'm laughing now.

I'm sure Denny would've been able to fly helicopters if he had been able to finish a college degree, or at least ROTC, which was a prerequisite for military duty, at least to be an officer, if you were in college. So rather than fly them, he decided to jump from them. He made 18 jumps. Five of them were out of C-130s, the big plane that drops the back part of it, and he was in a reconnaissance team of three men in charge of a jeep, and during those five jumps, they would push the jeep out ahead of them, on a rack, and they would try to follow it down so they could recover it as quickly as possible. The rest of the jumps were made from a prop plane, and on one jump, he said, he caught the prop blast, which about tore off his helmet and goggles.

And it was pretty much left at that until just recently, during a visit to the doctor in his last year, when the doctor was checking his ears and said, "You were airborne." Brother's answer to that was, "How do you know?" And the doctor, an older doctor, said, "I've seen this happen often to older men like yourself. You did damage to your ear, and you never knew it." So, I'm sure, they laughed, and they shook hands, and that was it.

Brother was gone the rest of my high school years, except for that one Christmas when my cousins arranged to pick Brother up at

Stapleton Airport and surprise Mom and Dad at the annual Christmas party down the block at my uncle's house. I can remember that he made a uniform even more honorable than it really is.

He was in the 82nd Airborne, stationed out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which has just recently been named Fort Bragg once again, after the Democrats changed it during their administration. One time the 82nd Airborne was called out during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Brother told me that they sat underneath a troop carrier for 18 hours with all their gear, M-16s ready to go if called to do so. It appears that the 82nd was going to be the backup. The jumpers were issued everything but live ammo, and thank You, Lord, that's as close as he or I came. Even though we had been trained up and were ready to serve, we were not called.

After serving and coming home, and spending two years in the Reserve to fulfill that part of the four-year plan, he would go to the Federal Center for the meetings as a drill sergeant. Now, that is a person who, if you see him in the movies and the TV shows, is the hard-ass guy. He's the one in your face. Well, Denny was not that way. Only, he sure shined as a soldier. He was a sergeant, a drill sergeant. I can still see him today. Thank you, mind's eye.

He came home and lived with Mom and Dad, who were often gone to the cabin during the summer. He went back to work for National Tea and very soon became an inspector. As they were processing sausages and meats, they would add filling, and he would make sure that the proper ingredients were added to each. He worked with a bunch of German and Hungarian immigrants. It was a meat processing plant, folks: cold, nasty work. He had a lot of friends there. One was a gentleman by the name of Hans, who belonged to the Brothers Fast, which was a motorcycle gang in North Denver, and then Denny started, even though he did not have a bike, riding and hanging out with those guys. Hans was not a very big guy, but boy, was he fast with his hands.

Brother, myself, and Hans were out for a few cocktails, late, and went to the local 24-hour taco house, and the bad guy from Lakewood showed up. Well, these two guys, Billy and Hans, had apparently met before. Well, at the end of the night, out in the parking lot, I never could imagine... imagine that this would happen, but as the two of them started to fight, Billy knocked Hans down, but Billy, twice his size, was getting his ass kicked, Billy on top, Hans on the bottom, wailing on this dude like I've never seen.

My brother ran with some pretty tough guys and was pretty tough himself. You know the story about being careful of the quiet guy: be careful of the guy who's not out there in the front, not trying to create issues. Be careful. Well, that's what Brother was. My other brother, Terry, and I and Brother were really good at watching each other's backs, and we had to do that a couple of times.

I must not forget that when Brother was in the military and stationed back in California for a few months, to train to be part of a reconnaissance team, where they learned radio and how to handle the .50-caliber machine gun that's on a turret in the back of the jeep (you've seen that), he was able to make contact with, as I mentioned before, that first love. And once again, her family and our family, like so many families, were just one big family. They were at the cabin early on, maybe as much as we were, as guests and helpers and friends. They were able to reunite, at least as far as making contact, and that gave him hope that someday he would have his forever dream fulfilled. He could have his life with his first love, and I thank God that it was able to happen. The two of them were meant to be together. With all the ups and downs and the challenges that they had together, they were able to accomplish great things.

Brother and his bride-to-be met again because of, once again, the family ties, and my wedding, and it wasn't too much longer after they dated that they were married at the cabin. I can still see little

Lisa and the beautiful bride standing on the staircase, both dressed in yellow dresses.

Afterward, Brother worked for a couple of construction companies: pipeline, fiber optics, and anything that would go into the ground.

Drake Contractors

After working his way up the ladder in a short time, he was head of construction for a well-established company out of Greeley, with all of the utility companies in Colorado. Connections were made. The owner of that company, who also owned a condo up in Lake Cliff in Dillon, and whom I got to know very well (small world, isn't it?), that generous owner, as he retired from the business, gave Brother a six-month advance payment to help start up a new business.

The new business was called Drake Contractors Inc. It picked up where the other company had left off, and it was full speed ahead. Major jobs included running the gas line through the South Platte River to supply gas to the new amusement park. Of course, my nephews could tell you more about what they may have accomplished.

For my father's birthday, my brother, who was running the gas line along the bike path in Summit County from Copper Mountain to Farmers Corner at the other edge of the lake, went ahead and rebuilt the bridge at Miners Creek and also put road base from the bridge on up to Drake Haven, to the garage.

Over a short period of time, he was employing over 100 people, including my nephews. Ann took care of the bookkeeping, while Denny had two very committed and great guys to help run the business.

Just a few months before the 9/11 attack on America, Drake Contractors was offered a buyout by a group of young graduates, who formed a business called Tetra Tech. They have an office in

Breckenridge and do work for us at the sanitation district in Frisco as our engineers and advisors. Once again, a small world.

When the attack on America happened, most everything shut down, including construction work, and it wasn't too many months after the attack that Drake was disbanded and sold off in bits and pieces to the best buyer. It was good timing as far as the sale went, but there's no doubt in my mind that Drake could've kept it together.

So my brother and his bride were now unemployed, after building a major company in Colorado and even beyond. As time went on, Brother's golf game got better. He became bored more than ever, and that was the case with his bride. Time went on, and then eight or nine years later we went into business, as previously described, with the property and log home built at Whispering Pines. The other two beautiful lots were sold off, and some profit was made, but major profits would've been made if we could've sold the properties with homes on them, as planned. For the next lot, we had already helped design a plan that would be equal to the log home that was sold.

Of course, the end of the story is that my brother and his bride lived out their lives, and both have passed, but not without a fight. I love them both, and I miss them both, and this is a reminder that we should try, and do more than try, to spend time with those whom we love, for no one knows the day that they may be called home.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

My Sons, Adam and Luke

AS STATED PREVIOUSLY, ADAM was born on July 19, 1978. And then Luke was born December 16, 1981. His birth was much easier after what Adam had experienced. The doctor decided that a C-section would be best, so Luke came out untouched, no struggle, beautiful, but he also had an issue. He had a nerve situation in his shoulder as a baby, and there again, we went down to Children's Hospital in Denver a few times, with lots of prayers, before it was all said and done.

The boys were three years apart. They grew up doing everything together, sharing snowboarding, skateboarding, all the things that little kids do in a safe neighborhood. They grew up in church. Both were dedicated to the Lord early on, and as they got older, both accepted Christ as their Savior. You couldn't be around their mother very long without knowing that she loved the Lord and the Lord loved her. The boys went to Royal Rangers, which is a Christian program for young boys, like the Boy Scouts.

They were in the Christmas plays. One year Adam played the part of Jesus as a boy, and Luke was an angel, and Dad was one of the three wise men.

I was able to coach both of them early on, and then Luke in the middle school football program. Like I said, Adam played Little League football for a year or two with the Lions Club program, but that was the extent of his football career; baseball and basketball became his favorite choices. The same with Luke: basically baseball,

basketball, and football in the middle school program. I played Luke at the tight end position, which I thought he played very well and fit with his size, and time and time again he would catch a pass and carry half of the defense down the field on his back and score.

Luke also won his age group's free-throw contest for the county, and we went to Eagle County for the next level of competition. He did not move on, but yeah, I'm proud of his accomplishments. At the high school level, he played fullback, and in his junior year, because of the three-strikes-and-you're-out rule relating to concussions, his career ended on the football field.

Both boys excelled in high school basketball, with Adam playing in the All-Metro League All-Star Game, shooting five three-pointers, and really shining. Adam has mentioned many times that Luke was his own man. Luke was invited to go and play in the NCAA-certified, invitation-only national basketball tournament held in Hawaii from July 8 through the 17th of 1999. He was selected by coaches from the state of Colorado at a national basketball conference. He would be competing against 49 other players from other states, showcasing the best juniors in the USA. This was an opportunity for Luke, being selected that way, and he was very proud to be a representative from Summit County. The girls that he dated were years older. He stood the same height as Adam. And yes, Adam as well achieved great things in high school, and Luke did it as well, on his own merit.

Luke belonged to a group called Peer Counseling, in which they would counsel their classmates. One dear friend of his, who now owns the famous bakery on Main Street in Frisco, was a young lady from Taiwan who was also in Peer Counseling. I got to know her here in Summit County, and she always made reference to the friendship that she and Luke had, she being from another country and another world.

We were able to follow all the activities that the boys were involved in, because being self-employed could make the schedules

work. Of course, as I've told so many young people, being self-employed does give you the freedom to coach or to follow your children in their activities, but at some point in time you have to make up the difference, or you will not succeed and will not be self-employed very long. We were all over the state, from basketball camps in Durango to the Western Slope to all over the metro area and even the Colorado Springs area. The boys were very popular in their school, even though, for a good part of the time they grew up, they had divorced parents.

College and the Fire

The boys never needed to be asked about homework or whether they got it done. They were always very good students and took responsibility on their own, and that part was so easy to manage from a parent's standpoint. They both graduated with honors and proceeded to pursue a college education, and with some student loans and a few scholarships, they were able to succeed. Adam went to Arizona for two years, CSU for a year, and ended up at Mesa College in Grand Junction. Luke went to Mesa College for a year and was part of a late-night DJ radio program with a fellow that he met on campus, and that, I believe, was the start of his short music career. After that year, he went on to Westwood College in Denver to study graphic design, and that begins another story about the beginning of his life.

Adam stayed in Grand Junction and worked at the Old Chicago restaurant, and Luke also worked at Old Chicago, in Thornton. They both made those connections by working here at Old Chicago.

On Luke's 20th birthday weekend, he had come home from work late with a friend of his that he worked with. She was only a friend, but she came home with him, and they visited. He shared some of his high school experiences with her, and then she left late in the evening. Luke calls her his angel, and she was a guardian an-

gel, for it wasn't too much later, after he had fallen asleep, that he was awakened by a fire alarm. The apartment building was on fire. He went to the door and opened it, and the hallway was completely full of dark black smoke, an unimaginable scene. He chose to go out the window, and during the whole event, he and some other people caught a lady who was jumping out of a third-floor window. A man died in the fire. I got a phone call at 6 o'clock in the morning saying, "Dad, turn on the TV," which I did, and it showed the apartment building, called Summit Apartments, on fire.

Zealous Apparel

Well, as if this was not a tragic enough situation, he had just moved to another apartment, which was more fitting to his needs, and the insurance policy had not been transferred. This was two weeks prior. Well, needless to say, he lost everything, and to add to that, he was not able to get his tuition reimbursed. Confused and disappointed, he chose to come home, at which time we set up a temporary bedroom over the garage, where he spent many years, until we were able to put on the most recent new addition.

Shortly after that, he was skateboarding, fell, and broke his ankle. This is when he had the time to start developing what down the road would be the Zealous Apparel company. Once he was able to get back on his feet, he was hired on at Shirt Off My Back, which was a local apparel store. He worked there for a bit, getting more and more understanding of what it was all about.

Time went on, and we were able to have the studio for the workshop turned into what would be the Zealous manufacturing center. With some help from a friend of mine whom I knew through dancing, of course, who was able to give us some advice, we started doing the summer craft shows every Saturday and special events in Dillon, and under a tent we started selling Luke's products. It also had great local backing at this time.

He had met a young lady several years older than he was, and she took him around as her trophy fella, and he was able to do some traveling with her to several different states. But at this time an opportunity came up to open a store on Main Street, which Adam and I operated.

Luke stayed in the shop, turning out hundreds and hundreds of products over three or four years. From 10 at night till six in the morning he would be out there, grinding away. My brother was able to loan us the money to purchase the equipment needed, which we were able to pay back within a reasonable amount of time.

At the same time, Luke was suffering with what later on would be determined to be PTSD due to the fire. Having experienced fire myself, the black wall and the smell of the smoke, and not knowing whether you're going to be able to get out, which he did, like I said, out a two-story window: if you've experienced it, I'm sorry, but for those who have not, I am glad. It's terrifying.

It reached a point where a psychiatrist was involved. She and Luke got along really well, and one time she asked me if I would meet with her, which I did. I remember sitting on her couch across from her, and as we visited, I shared what I knew, and I'll never forget what she said to me: "Mr. Drake, I love Luke's mind. He has a beautiful mind, and every time we meet, he makes me feel so much better when he leaves, as if I were receiving therapy from him." He would see her on a regular basis, and he seemed to be fine until she left to work at Children's Hospital in Denver, where she was for eight or nine years before she passed.

At the same time, with his love for music, Luke also met a friend, and they created what was called Recess. They did a CD introduction at a nightclub in Breckenridge, played at Herman's Hideaway in Denver, and made several stops in the Fort Collins and Boulder area. His friend got married and moved on, and as far as the band continuing on, it did not.

After that, Luke, living at home full-time, had a job at Frisco Fireplace along with working with me, and he really enjoyed that part, installing fireplaces, working with a really neat dude living in Leadville. He and a friend also did a small project for me at the Frisco Sanitation District, and later on in life he was my right-hand man with Ron Drake & Company and took care of all the techie stuff that I refused to take care of, or didn't have the knowledge of, or had chosen not to have the knowledge of.

After his mother moved to Kremmling, up until the day that she passed, which was here at the Haven on October 31, 2023, he would go down at least once or twice a week to Kremmling, taking his mom wherever she needed to be, and that was usually at least one day a week, every week, for six or seven years. The boys' mother loved Jesus, and Jesus loved her. She knew the Bible, and Luke knew the Bible, as you knew if you were around for any length of time.

Luke has been struggling with his mental health. He says it's like constantly being nagged at, like someone poking at your chest all the time, always in your face. It hurts me how he hurts and how he struggles.

Adam's Path

Adam, meanwhile, was trying to find his way after leaving Mesa in Grand Junction, going home to live with Anne in Kremmling and living under her tough-love policies, and also, always, in a prayerful way. Adam worked in Kremmling for a year with a company that supplied and owned a vending machine business down in that area, so he learned something about low-voltage electricity and working with tools.

I had just started a new house in Breckenridge. The owner had lined up an electrician whom I had not met, but we became friends, and I asked him if he needed an apprentice or someone to help him build his business, and he bought into it. Adam came back to Drake

Haven, went to work for this electrician, and learned the basic electrical skills that have brought him to this point today.

Unfortunately, after that young man had dealt with, apparently, a broken heart, he shot himself sitting in his airplane in Leadville. He had actually flown me back from Durango when I sold Dad's car to a buyer down there who bought it on the internet; John met me there and flew me back to Leadville. A tragedy, yes. Life isn't always what you had hoped. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, thank you.

After that, Adam worked for a major electrical company in the county and a couple of other sole-proprietor businesses, and just this year, in the fall of 2026, he got his master's.

We live at home, and it saddens my heart, as I have mentioned before, that neither Luke nor Adam, and I hope I'm wrong, will know the love that I experienced with my girl, Trouble. I mentioned it early on, and I'll continue mentioning it: life was simple. No lies were spoken. We always spoke the truth. We were not consumed by the world around us.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The History of Drake Haven

NOW, THE HISTORY OF Drake Haven. Mom and Dad visited a small cabin owned by neighbors in Edgewater. The lady of the family was Mom's dearest friend. They lived in Edgewater, catty-corner and just a few houses down on Lamar Street from where Mom and her brothers were born. I don't know how they arranged the meeting with the owner of Bill's Ranch, a homestead property.

They walked the property, the first lot, the one that the cabin is on, and marked with rocks what they would consider to be the lot lines. The lot lines were not established until the early '90s, and because so much of the ranch was not surveyed or platted when it was completed in the '60s, the parcels in between the ownership of other lots were sold off at a very reasonable price, so they could become taxable property. That was an opportunity for us to purchase the other two lots, one being a 2-acre lot, which of course added to the value and the size of Drake Haven.

The owner of the property was paid $6,500 to complete the almost 3 1/2 acres of property, with, of course, Miners Creek running down through it, and a pathway for all the wildlife that lives in the Colorado mountains.

Mom and Dad were able to sign a contract for $100 for the first lot. Now keep in mind that in those days, $2,500 was the average annual income for a worker in the state of Colorado.

My neighbor, who still comes and visits their property, she being a second-generation rancher, like myself, was given the ledger

to care for, which shows all the transactions that took place early on at Bill's Ranch.

Grandpa worked at Meek's Luggage in Denver. Grandma worked at May D&F, in the candy department. And they owned a home on Corona Street in the heart of Denver, 10 minutes' walking distance from Five Points, which was a primarily Black part of Denver. Grandma would mention someone getting sick, and the family would often ask Grandma to come and help take care of that person. Grandma often said, "Go get Betsy. She'll know what to do." Keeping all of this in mind, Grandma and Grandpa are shown in the ledger.

The $100 was paid in $10 payments over 10 different periods, and there was no demand, other than every time Mom and Dad would come up, they would meet up and make a payment.

Grandpa worked six days a week, so very seldom would we ever see him up at the cabin, but on Sundays he and Grandma would come by, and we would usually go to the Brown Derby in Arvada, which was a cafeteria-style restaurant. Grandpa would bring Mom either a 7-Up or a Pepsi, a liter, which was always welcome, because we usually did not have a lot of soda early on.

Grandma would come up once in a while, and I can still see her today, peeling logs. The logs came from what is now called Giberson Bay, named after a pioneer family that lived right nearby. Swanson had a sawmill right where the bay is now, and that's where Dad and Mom got the logs. Dad made a comment about coming by to make a payment for the logs, and Mr. Swanson, as Dad put it, was dead drunk behind the counter, so Dad just left whatever was owed there and went on his way.

I must mention Grandma peeling logs. The logs were cut on three sides only, with bark still on the round side of the log, which had to be peeled with a drawknife. I can remember, once again, seeing Grandma out there peeling those logs while I played as if I were building a log cabin. What I did was split pieces of siding into

2-inch pieces, which then looked kind of like logs, and I would stack them one on another, as if they were Lincoln Logs, for my model cabin.

Building the Cabin

Family, friends, and neighbors would come over the next several years. We would camp out in a tent inside the concrete and stone foundation that Dad would be working on, one stone after another, which were hauled in a homemade trailer that Dad made. The stones came from the slide area, which you can still see in Tenmile Canyon as you go toward Copper Mountain. The railroad grade was even more defined then, and you could still find ties, and also the spikes that held the rails in place. Several spots along that stretch of the river had deep pockets where good-size trout could be caught, almost guaranteed, in the afternoon.

Years went on, and finally the cabin was built. Dad had an opportunity, working with Public Service, to go and fill in for a week in the Leadville office. At that time, they were converting the old wood-burning stoves that lasted forever to gas appliances. Dad was able to purchase the wood burner from a lady and gave her five dollars, which included delivery. It now sits in the Frisco Historic Park, and for years it served the Drakes and all of those with us unbelievable meals. It had four burners and a water reservoir, which was attached to the side, for warming water from the stove. It had a bake oven, which was part of the back wall that led up to the flue.

A well was drilled early on and has been the main source of water from that day. Otherwise, the toilet was flushed with water from the stream, and the stream was always our summer refrigerator, to keep cool the milk, the watermelon, and anything that might need to be held at a cooler temperature. Mom and Dad got to know the owners of Foote's Rest on Main Street, who were the suppliers of the ice, which was cut during the winter on Bill's Lake and stored in

an outbuilding with sawdust on top to keep it from melting, and it worked. They were the grocery store, the single-pump gas station, and the post office for the town, and they became very good friends. Anne ended up teaching school with Helen Foote, who was the wife and the proprietor of Foote's Rest.

In 1968, we were able to build the first addition to the cabin, which consisted of a living room and full bath downstairs and a half bath in the bedroom upstairs.

As mentioned before, this was Adam's first home. We had H&D Construction and the Spare Tire restaurant, and I was still building the four-bedroom, two-bath Dillon Valley home almost single-handedly. My good friend and I were hired to build a two-car garage with an apartment above it, a few years after Dad had sold the Edgewater home and moved full-time to Bill's Ranch and the Haven.

In 2000, we were able to have a sewer line connected, due to a transfer with the sanitation district to eliminate the phosphorus created by septic tanks, and by this exchange with Copper Mountain, we were able to get the tap free, which now equates to $18,000. All we did was make the connection, eliminating the septic tank, 120 feet to the main in the road. At that time, I was asked to serve on the Frisco Sanitation board, which I've done for 26 years, and I have chaired the board for 12 years. It's a board of five, with a staff of seven today.

The Beavers

Miners Creek, the smallest of all the tributaries that feed Lake Dillon, runs through the Haven, through the largest lot, which was purchased in 1965 to add to the original lot purchased from Bill Thomas at Bill's Ranch back in 1946. The tributary was dammed at one time, which created a pond in the middle of the largest of the three lots. Of course, that dam was created by a beaver family. On a

July weekend in the mid-'90s, heavy rain and a late thaw caused that dam to break at the stream. No longer was that pond fed by Miners Creek.

The pond had been used for years by a beaver family, who continued to try to increase the size of the pond, creating more wetland at Drake Haven, destroying trees and flooding the land. Many nights, with my flashlight and my .22 rifle, I would go out to the pond with a few rocks, which would cause the beavers to surface, at which time I would have to pull the trigger. They can be a true nuisance, even though they are so much a part of the ecosystem. As much as I hate to say it, they could build a dam across the creek in the middle of the night that would take me 20 minutes the next morning to tear out. We did this many times, but we could never stay ahead of the dam builders.

I'm reminded of when we were living in the Dillon Valley house, where Straight Creek ran right behind our property, and often the boys and I would go down to the ponds along the river and throw a rock in the beavers' ponds and watch how they would react.

Close Calls and Good Doctors

As I was sharing with Adam today, after an appointment with my orthopedic specialist, I was reminded that it was the same doc who took care of Adam's blown-up shoulder, a shattered scapula.

I can remember the night he and his brother were night skiing at Keystone. I, with a friend and another couple, had just sat down for dinner at a small dinner house in Dillon, and yes, at that time I did have a cell phone. Well, it was bad news. Adam was on the way to the hospital, so of course, like any parent, I excused myself, let the friends, who knew both the boys, know what was going on, and went to the emergency room. Well, he did mend. His brother took care of him. I took care of him. I remember him sitting in what is now a sunroom or bedroom in the old cabin, in the middle of the

floor in a lounge chair, and he was in misery for quite some time after the surgery.

Another reminder, as I write this, is the fact that he and three other guys, after a basketball game, headed up to Breckenridge to a friend's and slid off the road. Yeah, we got the call as we were sitting down for dinner with the family, so we hastened to Breckenridge, where he was at the Breckenridge clinic. Some of the other boys were banged up a little bit, but he was not.

Now, this reminds me of another time, when he and Luke were living in Wheat Ridge with their mom. They were with a neighbor and her son when they were hit by a FedEx truck. It T-boned the car. Adam got a few scratches, nothing serious, but it could've been way worse. Thank You, Lord. Thank You.

This all brought about a remembrance of years ago, when we were all coming down from Rainbow Lake, and Dad slipped and put his hand down on the piercing end of an aspen tree cut by the beaver family. I remember racing down. It could've been just our family, or with other members or friends; I don't recall. But I know we had to go and lock up the cabin and close everything down. There was no Eisenhower Tunnel to go through, and no doctors up here to go to. He wrapped his hand in a tea towel as we raced down, eventually ending up at St. Anthony's Hospital. Who knows how many hours that took?

I just wanted, once again, to reflect on the times here at the Haven when things were not as they are now. I have the best physicians, who are not only my friends but the best there are. Some 15 or 20 years ago, the new hospital was built. We are part of CommonSpirit, and, like I say, we have the best care within five minutes of the Haven, friends as well as professionals. I was teasing my doc today, whom I hadn't seen for 15 years, since he repaired my wrist, and who was also Adam's doctor. He was the poster child 15 or 20 years ago for Vail-Summit Orthopaedics, and I was kidding about that, and that's why I thought that he was no longer practic-

ing in the county. Yeah: friends and doctors, neighbors and doctors, caretakers. How blessed we are here in our neighborhood.

A Place to Welcome People

The Haven was always a place to welcome people, for them to come and have peace and relax and possibly get away from their problems. I praise God that, whatever happens, we are in God's hands. It's time for me now to quit for a bit and gather my thoughts.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Dogs of Our Lives

I MUST NOT FORGET all of the canines that we were blessed to have in our lives. The first one was Mitzi. Mom and Dad inherited her at an old age from Mom's parents, who had passed. Mitzi was the dog that Grandma, from what Mom had said, called "Tata Ila, you fart hound," or something like that in Swedish, which meant in English, "You stink, fart hound."

Our next dog was Cookie, a dog from the dog pound. She was a black-and-white shepherd, about 35 pounds. Brother was on his bike with Cookie running beside him, on the way to Poindexter's grocery store, five blocks down on 25th. She was hit by a car, and the bumper tore into her chest. It was a small community. I don't know exactly how it went after that, or how she was tended to, but she wore a girdle-type protective vest for quite some time. A great dog, other than that she did not like anyone in a uniform. We found that out when the mailman came; anyone wearing a uniform was not invited. She lived a long life, and once again we felt the void that only a dog can fill.

The next dog was Kenosha, meaning, if I'm not mistaken, "little girl." She came from the family whose boy and girl Mom had been babysitting. Like all of them, she was a great dog.

The next dog was Freckles. She was part Saint Bernard and as lovable as a big old pup could be. We got her from a lady who was giving them away in front of Walmart here in Frisco.

The next one was Maddie. She was a beautiful black Lab who came from the Frisco animal shelter, which is a no-kill shelter, and we've always had a lot of dogs to pick from.

When the boys were young (I almost forgot) there was Sammy, who was a small, almost toy-type poodle, black in color, but a construction dog from the get-go, and once again a real companion.

Now there was BB, and I'm going to read the story that I wrote about her and how she touched all of our lives. How I remember that it was a beautiful fall day.

BB

It was September 29, a day not forgotten. A friend was bringing me back to the Haven after a nice lunch that was meant for a birthday, my birthday. As we rounded the corner, there she was, walking her handler. I asked my friend to please stop, and of course she did. I was curious and asked the handler if she was a pup, and the answer was, "Yes, she is. Her name is BB." I just started a conversation with him, and he said, "Do you want to walk her?" I said, "Sure, we are going up the road." I got out to stroll on up to the Haven, and I walked as BB led me. We went up the back way, and as we topped the hill, there were some of my friends.

It was a surprise party, only my second, LOL. This was really the start of a love relationship that would grow over 6 1/2 years of loving Adam, Luke, and me.

As she pranced and showed her stuff, wandering around at the party, we realized what a unique dog she was. She had to greet everyone that day, and when it was time for the handler to take her back, it didn't take us very long to think about her living at the Haven. We looked at each other, and on Monday, with $50 in hand, we went to the pound, 10 minutes away by foot, and we adopted her. Like all of the other dogs, she immediately knew her boundaries, and we never had to put a dog on a chain or a rope.

She became so much a part of our lives, and so much can be said, but as we look back at it now, she was a therapy dog only in her own right, but that's how she made us feel.

The reason she was at the pound is that she came with two other dogs from a family from California, and it wasn't too long until they were not able to manage all three, so the neediest one, which was BB, was the one that had to be released. I'm sure that was hard for the previous owners.

She and Luke would take long walks, a lot of them almost to the base of Peak One. One night on one of those walks, it got dark sooner than they had planned, and without a flashlight Luke, as he said, got concerned, but as it turned out, he brought them both home safe and sound.

She went to work with me every day, and in the morning she would be lying out by the truck, ready to go, sometimes more so than I was.

Like Maddie, BB had some type of autoimmune disease that took both of them in just a matter of two or three weeks. And she will be the one, I know, who will meet me at the Rainbow Bridge when my time comes, and we can be together, as promised. Dogs in heaven? You're doggone right.

Zoey

Then, of course, we have Zoey. High dollar was paid for her. She's a sweetheart, very sensitive. She has allowed so many dogs to come here, and she gives up all that she has to make sure that they're comfortable and taken care of. She had six brothers and sisters, who all were here at one time; there are pictures of them in the pond, and then the family reunion of a few years ago. So many dogs, and she was so accommodating.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Angels Along the Way

ONE LABOR DAY WEEKEND, my brother, my best friend Terry, and I borrowed Ray's Jeep and took our dates up Sheep Mountain near Heeney. There were six of us, with my brother driving. As we crossed a small creek on the dirt trail, the steering went out while we were climbing uphill. Denny and Terry, the mechanics, figured out that a nut had come off and freed up the steering. Thank God, we found it and repaired the Jeep right there. I thought about that not too long ago. If it had happened while we were coming down the mountain, we very likely would have gone off the mountain or onto the highway. Praise God.

I also had two opportunities to fall off roofs. One time, I slid down a ladder with a running Skilsaw in my hand, and I did not let go of it. Angels? Yes, I have experienced angels.

Anne ended up coaching girls' basketball, and during one practice she tore her Achilles tendon. That type of medical care was not available in the county at the time, even though today we have the best orthopedic group in the whole country. She regularly traveled down to Colorado General for early-morning appointments. One dark morning, while driving down Silverthorne Hill, she realized she had a flat tire and had to pull off on the hill. She was in a cast, there were no cell phones, and what was a woman to do?

As Anne explained it, only a minute or two passed before, as she put it, a handsome young man appeared at her window and asked

how he could help. Within minutes, the tire was changed. The angel was gone, and she was on her way, amazed by what had taken place.

Yes, I believe in God's angels. If we all look back, I think we can see how often God has protected us.

One morning, I went to recycle just a couple of minutes from the Haven. As I pulled out of the gate, the left front ball joint broke and the front of the truck dropped. I opened the door and said, "Praise God." A couple of people looked at me as if I were losing my mind. No, I was praising God. Within a few minutes, Luke and I would have been driving down Silverthorne Hill in the right lane, which needed quite a bit of roadwork. I pictured the two of us rolling down the highway, most likely with critical injuries. I praised God that it happened while I was going three miles an hour instead of sixty or sixty-five. Yes, He has watched my back, and I am sure He has watched yours many times as well.

Another angel story: about seven years ago, on a Saturday morning at 9 o'clock, I was headed to Silverthorne to do a blood test, and I pulled off the interstate at the Silverthorne interchange, where you would take a left at the light, go past the traffic and through the median, and then take a right into Silverthorne.

Well, it was BB and me, my favorite pup. We've had so many good dogs; every one was special. As we pulled up, the light was red, and off to the left was a man standing there asking for money for help. Well, I happened to have an extra five dollars in my wallet, so I rolled down my window and asked him where he was going, and he said to Georgetown. Not realizing at the moment that he was in the last place to catch a ride to Georgetown (actually, he would need to be across Highway 9 at the exit to I-70 heading east), I offered the money, and he took it, and I was putting my wallet back in my pocket when the light changed. If I had been pulling out when I normally would have, I would've been T-boned by a vehicle running the light, trying to make the turn onto I-70. Well, for one split moment, we were not put in that particular situation.

So I made my turn and headed west, and I realized that that person was far from where he needed to be to catch a ride, so I immediately questioned that, and rather than turning toward the clinic, I took a left turn, turned back around, and went back up to check on what had just taken place. Well, of course, as you might expect, that person, or that angel that God placed there at the perfect time, knowing that BB and I would be there at that exact moment... He put His angel there to keep us from harm. Oh yeah, I believe in angels. I've seen angels.

I am reminded of an event that took place in the driveway at the Dillon Valley house. One morning, as I was getting ready to leave for work, after starting the truck, I felt an urge to check behind me before I backed out. Well, as God would have it, there behind me was Adam on his Big Wheel tricycle. Praise God, for once again He showed up as promised. One other story about Adam and his Big Wheel tricycle: he decided one day that he was going to ride himself up to see his aunt in Loveland. We realized he was gone. It became a neighborhood-watch situation and a call to the sheriff's office. He was found on his tricycle on Little Beaver Trail, down close to where he would be entering the highway. Another praise-God moment.

The Twin Towers Picture

Probably the most recent event in my life must also be noted. Luke and I were shopping for a rug for the house at the thrift store in Silverthorne. As we entered, a picture hanging on a pole caught my eye. I asked the volunteer what they wanted for it. It was a picture of the Twin Towers in New York. The gentleman asked, "Are you from New York?" I said no. He asked, "Then why would you want that?" I said, "I don't know." We got the rug and the picture.

I took the picture home and left it sitting around as a remembrance of that terrible day. Weeks passed. On Friday, November 5,

2021, we were wrapping up work on a four-unit condominium project in Breckenridge. My friend, a plumbing subcontractor, owned one unit. He owed us for the work, so we owned a second unit, and the other two belonged to two different families. That morning, I planned to meet with my help and correct a window we had installed. We had also replaced the siding and completed several other parts of the job. When I woke up, I did not feel like doing much and seriously considered calling the help and putting it off until Monday. Instead, I dragged my butt out of bed and went to finish the project as planned. My plumber friend and his wife were away, and a woman was staying there to watch their two pups. I had gotten to know her.

The Fire

That morning, as she was leaving, she asked whether she should leave the unit unlocked because we had been using its bathroom. I told her, "No, we're fine." I went upstairs in the third unit carrying a five-gallon bucket, something I had never considered part of my tools. I was using a banana knife to scrape out blown-in insulation and dropping the pieces into the bucket. As I worked, one of my helpers called out, "Ron, come down here. There's smoke coming out of the eave of Joe's unit." I ran downstairs and looked. Yes, smoke was coming from the unit. I went through the garage, around the corner, and into the living room. The kitchen was on fire.

I knew where one puppy was. One dog was blind, and the other was deaf. The deaf one was right by the door, so I grabbed him, threw open the door, and handed him to the renters from the second unit, who were now outside. I ran back to the third unit, grabbed my five-gallon bucket, and filled it with as much water as I could. Then I ran through the front door and into the kitchen and threw the water onto the toaster oven, which the dog watcher had

left on that morning. As God would have it, one of the renters had put away the garden hose only a few days earlier. He knew exactly where it was, hooked it to the faucet off the front porch, and ran it into the kitchen.

He handed me the hose, and I was able to douse the fire. The flames were gone, but the room filled with smoke, and we still had a dog we could not find. I went back through the garage and came around the corner. Immediately, there was nothing but a black wall. I could not see through it. I could not breathe, but I kept trying to find the other puppy. He was blind, so he could not see his way out. I had never experienced anything quite like that. It was so dark and so threatening. After searching throughout the house without finding the puppy, I had to back out.

In the meantime, someone had called the fire department. They arrived, and nine minutes later the fire was out. It became a two-alarm fire. I was told that the flames had already started getting into the floor and that it would not have been long before the entire building was lost.

Unbelievable. That morning, I had wanted to forget the plans and stay home. If we had not been there, the building could have burned to the ground. I had pissed and moaned all the way to Breckenridge. Even as I passed Farmers Corner, where I could have turned around or made a call, I chose to keep going. What did I learn from this? Honor your commitment.

Another thing stayed with me. Once the flames were out, there was no light, only darkness. It reminded me of a parallel with Jesus Christ in our lives. He is the light. He lights our way. Two hours later, when the hoses were wrapped up and put away, the fire department found the other puppy underneath the couch, near the door to the garage. Finley was the blind one, and he was alive.

I went home with the smell and stench of the fire in my truck and in my clothes. My lungs were full of terrible smoke. When I got home, I took my clothes off outside, hurried into the shower, and

scrubbed myself down. When I finished, I sat on the couch and went back through everything I had just experienced.

Then I heard a sweet, small voice. This is what God spoke to me: "This is what it will be like for those who don't know Me." He also shared with me, "That is what it was like in the towers." I finally understood why the picture of the Twin Towers had caught my attention. I did not know it at the time, but now it all meant something and made everything more real. God works in amazing ways.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Hard Days

I'M GOING TO SHARE my experiences with encountering death or witnessing difficult situations. When I was working for Sturgeon Electric, once a week we were required to take a safety class. I learned how to do CPR, along with some of the other required classes.

One Saturday morning we were awakened by the neighbor across the street, from an elderly couple. The gentleman had fallen in the bathroom, and he lay unconscious. We were taught to do it by breathing into the person's mouth. Well, I ran across the street and tried to do as we were instructed, with no results. The man had died, but not knowing that, I proceeded until the fire department arrived. Yes, as we were also taught, be very aware that you will be very sick to your stomach and the rest of your body. There I go again, throwing up.

Also, one day, working for Sturgeon, I saw a man have his leg blown off from the knee down when the crane swung its arm into an overhead power line, and he just happened to be leaning up against the wheel well. He was the main source of grounding for the power that came from that line. A pretty awful sight to see.

The man and family that I mentioned, the huge Catholic family that helped open the door for me in Summit County, had seven children then, and later on in life two more were born. The oldest girl, aged 17 or 18, if I recall, and a boy without a good reputation, and another young couple were on a float trip down the Blue River,

and as the story unfolded, it appeared that she went overboard and was lost in the raging river. The whole community, as small as it was even then, walked both sides of the river, and a net was even set up at the entrance of Green Mountain Reservoir. The body was never found, and there was always speculation that foul play may have been involved.

Another tragic event took place when we were still operating the Spare Tire, when my cousin's father-in-law, dealing with dementia, came by for a visit after he had been fishing the river. His son had a trailer in Silverthorne, where they were living temporarily while working at the Henderson mine. After a cup of coffee, my friend was going to walk on down to the trailer. He did just that, but with his dementia, he put the house key in the wrong door, and it broke off. This was determined later on.

That evening a storm moved through pretty quickly, and of course, with him lost, not much could be done that night. We all did what we could, and that morning they were able to follow some tracks that led them a few miles above the Blue River, where he had slipped down a slope and was stopped by trees; otherwise, he may have gone over the cliff. But he had broken his leg. There again, as a neighbor of the sheriff, and as everyone else knew, of course, I had been the last one to see him, and as family as well, I was asked to go down, which I did. I snowmobiled in with an officer or two and the coroner and identified the body.

In the early '90s, I was a material witness for a murder in the town of Dillon. We were headed back to the post office, which was always in Dillon, at 9 a.m., when off to the side, at the back of a huge, empty corner lot, there appeared to me, from a distance, a body in a puffy-type coat with the hood over it. So I stopped at the three-way stop and walked around what appeared to be possibly a crime scene. I sent Jan on to try to locate a police officer, because as I got closer to what was then clearly a body, which appeared to

be frozen, I had my cowboy boots on, so I backed out very cautiously, so the other tracks that I had followed were not disturbed.

What had taken place: the body was that of a 20-year-old man who was employed at Keystone, and it was the end of the ski season. He had a roll of cash, ready to go home back East the next day. He had been playing pool most of the night at one of the few local clubs. As the evening wound down, this man was walking back down along Main Street and was followed by, as it turned out, the murderer, and hit in the head with a rock the size of a softball. I know because I found the rock on the side of the road while we were waiting for the police to show up. Yes, there was blood on the rock, which identified it later on as the murder weapon. We had plans to meet with some folks on a business deal, but of course that never happened.

They did find the person involved, and there was a trial, and yes, I had to share my story and had to watch the mother of the victim. In fact, after the trial and the punishment was determined, the mother of the victim asked if we would show her the location and the details, which of course we did.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Saying Goodbye

MOM WENT INTO THE hospital that year on Valentine's Day. She died on Saint Patrick's Day, and she was buried on the first day of spring. Dad gave me the call that early morning, and I raced down the hill and was able to be with her in her last few moments. I praise God for that. I had a job in Denver at that time and was traveling back and forth, going early in the morning, accomplishing what we could, and getting back to beat the traffic by 4 o'clock.

Dad was in a rehab facility in Lakewood after he had fallen and hit his head at the apartment complex where he was loving and living his life out. I would always stop by and see him on my way back up the mountain, and that was the case that afternoon. He was sound asleep, and I didn't want to wake him, but I remember very vividly rubbing his ankles and feet, with no response. This was a Friday, and on Saturday Brother called me and said that he was on his way to check on Dad, because Dad had said that he was dying. Brother did check on Papa, and everything seemed to be OK. I got the call Sunday morning that Dad had passed in the middle of the night, between two and four, and seemed to be at peace. Well, of course he was at peace, with Mom, Jesus, and all of those who had gone before. Of course he was at peace.

Back in 1994, when my uncle was ready to die, I was down at the hospital with his three daughters. And it came to my mind then, and I will always continue to believe this, that sometimes a person is so ready to go, wants to go home, wants to go to the kingdom as

promised. That's, of course, if you know Christ Jesus, the living God, and you know about His promises for those with eternal life in their future. So I shared with the girls that sometimes we just need to let go and let God. Sometimes, I believe, a person will stay around because that's the wish of those who love that person, so whatever we do, we are in God's hands. And I know that shortly after they were able to release their loving dad, it wasn't too long before he got his permission to move on.

The boys' mother, after some health issues, was still living in Kremmling, but after some hospital care here in Summit County, she was rehabbing with us here at the Haven on October 31, Halloween. She came out of the bathroom and was preparing to sit on the bed, waiting for her coffee, which was being prepared by Luke. I heard her yell, "Luke, Luke, Luke, Luke!" and it was different, and I ran downstairs to check on what was going on, and Luke had her two hands, and she had fallen back on her bed. I immediately yelled for Adam, who was shaving upstairs in his room, and ran out, calling 911, to meet the fire department at the door. Luke tried to resuscitate her, to no avail, with some help from Adam. Not what you would like your sons to have been a part of. The fire department was there within just a few minutes and tried to bring her back. I'm sure she was fighting all the way, wanting to go meet her God and the Son, Jesus.

The lieutenant with the fire department grew up with the boys, and he very apologetically, after eight minutes, came out and shared with us that she was gone. One of those happy-sad moments, but we have the comfort to know she has finally got her wings and is home with all of those loved ones who have gone before her.

I know it had to be difficult for my brother and his sons and daughter to let their wife and mother go. And then there's my brother. I was able to talk to him just four hours before there was no more suffering, no more anxiety, no more frustration, and I got

the call that early morning. Yes, a praise-God moment. My brother suffered for years, and yes, I miss the morning talks that we would have there for a couple of years, and I will miss watching the Band of Brothers movie and series, about the Army and all of the events that took place during World War II. I love you, Brother. You're always on my mind, and I hope to see you soon.

I know that God has His hand on my shoulder, and soon, and I hope soon, He will call me home. I'm tired. My life has been full. I don't have the strength that my brother had, and I don't have the willingness. This is not a death wish, but I will not be able to carry on much longer. There's not enough duct tape to hold this body together for much longer. It has served me well, but as I have said before, repeating what Dad would always say, the old wheels are coming off the turnip wagon. Let's laugh about that.

PART FOUR

Looking Back

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Sixty Years Later

She Found Me

ONCE AGAIN IN MY life, when we were already established in Summit County, good friends Bubby and Bubbles were in Denver, after Bucky had died, visiting some relatives. They came to the cabin, and we had a picnic, and a nice time was shared.

I often wondered later on, when Trouble and a daughter or two showed up at the Spare Tire restaurant that we were operating, while also running the business of H&D Construction out the back door. The boys' mother was pregnant with Adam, and I happened to be there and came around the counter to see, surprisingly enough, Trouble. We visited. She was on the way to Denver to catch a plane and had been in Cortez visiting her parents, saw Bubby, and decided to go the interstate way, and that's how she found me.

The Picture

My cousin's daughter was visiting a friend in Dillon last fall, a friend she had gone to school with. She contacted me, and we met up and had dinner together, with her and her girlfriend and Luke and me. On December 28, 2025, I received a card from her with the picture of that weekend that was spent at the cabin, with her mother and dad, her brother, my uncle, a couple of my cousins, my mom and

dad, my brother, and there she was, Trouble, right there looking at me. I cried for two days.

I went to my class books and started tearing out the pictures of her, and the memories came back as if it were yesterday. The one other picture that was taken, and the only one that I had kept, was of Trouble and me, with her arm on my arm, at one of the events. Regret? I believe, yes, this would be my only regret. Other events took place within a few days: I had a phone call from Hesperus, Colorado, in reference to a reverse mortgage, which immediately brought back the hunting trip and so much time spent there. Also, about that same time, I had just watched Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid once again, which reminded me of the time we jumped off Baker's Bridge. I started to listen to records that reminded me of those days, and my mind went wild, and I cried, and I still cry.

Because I think of Trouble one more time, and will probably throughout the course of this text, there might be times of remembrance that I will share, as I am doing now, with tears in my eyes. She was so young, so alive; she brought me so much joy. I never knew a love like hers.

When I first saw her picture six months ago, all our three years came before my eyes. It was like a storm in my mind. There was blue sky, and then there was gray sky, not knowing which. She was like a lightning bolt that pierced my heart. As I mentioned before, I said to myself, "What do I do with all of this? What does it all mean?"

Did she come to me again, or maybe, just maybe, did I never let her go? Other girls have come and gone, but her love for me never could be replaced, and I'm seeing that now. Her touch, her mischievous ways, her smile, her eyes, her warm embrace. Thank you, Trouble. You gave me your body, you gave me your heart. You gave me your soul, and you cared for me.

I will relive those close to three years time and time again. It's what and how true love was ever meant to be, as Jesus Christ showed us. Thank you, Trouble. And because of who you were, and hopefully who you still are, I hope your life was full of happiness, sunshine, and love, and with you so much a part of that, how could it not have been?

The Mind's Eye

Maybe it's time for me to address where I'm at in my life today. I'm a little concerned about these thoughts; it became so real. And I know in the Bible it says old men will dream dreams and young men will see visions. So I asked: am I going a little crazy and trying to make up something that's not truly there? And the answer is, it's called the mind's eye, where, yes, the brain is capable of revisiting things of the past. I feel much better knowing this now, that I'm not going a little crazy. And then I shared with my friend: I'm going to be speaking the truth; there's no other means, no other way to do it.

Is there a reason that I'm reliving this, 60 years ago, with such clarity right now? I'm feeling the chill of the winter of my life, and so if this is what I have to hang on to, those dreams, those visions I see forever playing like an award-winning movie, then let it be shared. Yes, I have a few pictures that I look at right now to see her face, but yes, I can close my eyes, and then she will be there. She was like a rainbow.

OK, here I go again. This morning on the early news: Robert Redford's Sundance is now making its home in Boulder. Yes, this triggered my time with Trouble, as I mentioned before. We jumped off Baker's Bridge, hand in hand, heart to heart, I thought. As I mentioned before, they were on campus a couple of times as guests for the theater. And I mentioned the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang, whom we often saw, making it a point to go to the Holiday Inn along the river,

where they were staying for several weeks during the filming of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. I am just constantly reminded of my troubles, forever in love.

A Good-Bad Day

Yesterday was one of those good-bad days. I heard from my friend Val that her mother had been rushed to the hospital for emergency surgery. Her mother had been suffering after just a couple of months of losing her husband, Val's father. That was the negative, but I've talked to her this morning, and her mom has been taken care of and will be on the mend. Praise God. And then Rhonda and John made their last trip to their new home at Cedar Ridge, where they can start a new chapter in their lives together.

It seems every time I turn around, I think of Trouble. It's very hard for me to move on from my troubles.

Going back, in reference to my previous text about Trouble, with a daughter or two, showing up at the Spare Tire restaurant: what if Anne had not been there, and I'd had an opportunity to have a cup of coffee and visit? Did Trouble come by to tell me that she was moving back to Cortez, that it was not working out? Could that have been the reason why?

Of my 56 years in Summit County, 26 of them I have been alone. Oh, yes, with friends, or acquaintances anyway. My troubles in the past: she keeps reappearing. I do want to believe that this is healthy and that it is not from the pit of hell, as I question life as it stands today and the paths that have led me to where I am.

I look for the get-up-and-go, and it seems that it has already gone. Where'd it go? Where is the strong desire to move on, or even the desire? I look back at how I have been blessed: quality of life, good health in most cases, a loving, caring family, friends, loved ones, truly loved ones, few as they may seem.

Shortly after Mom passed in 1983, I developed a perforated ulcer and ended up losing a lot of blood before I realized what was going on. I ended up in Vail Hospital with a transfusion. I thought that I was going to have and live with the Lumberg stomach and would also die, or be called home, by my 68th birthday. It's apparent that the Lord has had another plan for me, for the moment.

It's very hard for me to move on and leave my troubles behind. This morning has been difficult for me; tears ran down my face. They're cool tears, if it matters. I asked the Lord why, and what is going on with me. I wrote a poem years and years ago called "The Masquerade," and it tells the story of a clown with all the colors of the rainbow, and yet he has a broken heart. I've pulled this out, and I think I was writing it about myself. I believe the Lord is allowing these tears to just flow down my face, often as I've prepared this text, but especially when I'm listening to old records, bringing remembrance of wonderful times that I've had, and those times when I refer back to my first love. And I refer to her, of course, as my troubles in the past, and now I'm reliving life with my troubles. And who is crazy enough to want to revisit his troubles?

A Broken Heart

My heart has been broken, but I believe that what I found at a very young age, and was blessed with at a very young age, is what true love is all about. We had one another, and family, and a few friends, in what I thought was to be forever, and a couple of circumstances very likely changed my life. But I thank God, in Jesus Christ, that He has been with me; I receive that. One thing I have learned, though, in my walk with my Lord, is never to question, never to ask why, and I believe I've been pretty good at holding to that. But I will be honest with you: I have asked the question "why" in the last few months more than I possibly ever have. I live with a broken heart, and I share the story with whoever might find it interesting, but I

believe that by living and remembering what was so dear to me, I can accept the broken heart.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Things I've Written

I FEEL NOW, AFTER two months of preparing these notes and memories, that I should share some writings from over the last several years, a lot of them from when I was alone. So here we go.

I know one thing: when you are in love, it shows.

Being kind is more important than being right.

Sometimes all a person needs is a hand to hold and a heart to understand.

To ignore the facts does not change the facts.

Our hearts never draw a line; don't be afraid to cross over it.

Follow your dreams, be true to your dreams, before they fade away.

Sometimes it is best to leave things as they are and just, as hard as it may be, move on.

Stay true to your heart.

Everyone needs someone to love them; I'm that someone.

Sometimes, when I'm walking through the forest, so quiet and at peace, I can hear your voice; I hear your voice in the wind. Your smile: I see your smile in the sun, so warm and so bright.

I called just to say hi, just to say I miss you, just to say I love you, not sure that that matters anymore, come what may.

I would never, ever want you to compromise who you are, because you are very special to me, just as you are.

Seasons may come, winter to spring, summer to fall, but I will love you through all the seasons.

I'm trying to push my love for you aside, but my dreams of you make it harder than I thought.

Our lives are like the trunk of a tree that has been cut through. You see the rings of life: some thin, times of drought; some thick, times of growth and prosperity; some hardly there at all, a time of pestilence and sickness. Each ring is a season all of its own.

A friend is a treasure from God. A friend is one who stands with you during good times and bad times. A friend will not judge you, but will love you. A friend will laugh with you and will cry with you when trials come. Friends will always be honest with one another.

It's time that you are no longer beaten down, but time that you are lifted up. I am going to help lift you up.

I am trying to stay present, focus on what life throws at me every minute, be open, kind, and selfless, and I want to give my heart away.

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

If I have failed you, please forgive me.

The only regret that I might have would be not knowing that everyone in this family knows, without any doubt, the living, the loving God, my God; the Son, Jesus; and the Holy Spirit that

lives in each of us. I love each of you, and I thank you for being a part of my life.

If you find someone who makes you smile, who checks up on you often to see if you're OK, someone who watches out for you and wants the very best for you, don't let them go. Keep them close, and don't take them for granted. People like these are hard to find.

In my mind, the most powerful thing that I was able to write was not from me; it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is the story behind that writing.

The Void You Filled in Me

On March 19, 2007, as Luke and I were on our way home from a workday, I mentioned that once again I felt like I needed to write a song. The same thing had been mentioned a week or so earlier. Luke said, "Go home, sit down at your desk, and write." I don't always do what my sons tell me, but I did just that. Fewer than 40 minutes had passed when I felt I was done. As I read back through it, tears started running down my cheeks.

I was truly amazed at what I had penned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I asked Luke to print it out for me, which he did that evening. Luke showed me the end result. His exact words were, "Dad, look where Jesus is." Jesus has been in the center of my life. Where is Jesus in your life?

The Holy Spirit used me, and He wants to use you. He wants to include you in His perfect plan for your life. Now, this is what the poem read. It is called "The Void You Filled in Me."

God, You created man and woman in the perfect image of Thee,
but yet You left out one thing, Lord, that void which was in me.

Then one day I saw Your creation and all that I could see;
that same day I saw the Creator and asked, would You fill this void in me?

One day I was lonely, empty, and cried;
that same day You sent Jesus to fill the void inside.

One day I was broken and torn apart;
that same day You sent the Comforter to heal my broken heart.

One day, when I'm tired, weary, and my life is done,
I will crawl upon my Father's lap, and I hope He says, "Well done,
my son."

My final wish for all my friends, loved ones, all whom I see:
that God my Creator would fill their void like He did for me.

My poem, from my heart, my love and His love for you.

— Ron, March 19, 2007.

Thank You, Lord. Like so much a part of my life, things such as this... I wonder if they should be shared more, or if it's just something between You and me.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Rest of the Story

AS I WAS IN thought, ready to put the few closing notes in Ron's story, I was reminded of something my brother and I did on Lake Dillon. Early on, when Brother had his beautiful ski boat, we brought it up to the lake, and we both water-skied on the lake. It was up at the small peninsula at the Snake River inlet. We did not have wetsuits, and we were very good at what we did when it came to slalom water-skiing. The only time we would ever get wet was at the time of the launch. You were never allowed to water-ski on the lake. It was never open for that activity. But we pulled it off, because it was early on, and who, and who, and who would be there to watch?

I have run out of words, and it's been a joy and an opportunity for me to reflect on my life, to visit times that I will cherish in the few hours, the few days, the few months that I have left.

The picture that I have referred to so often, which was sent to me by my cousin's daughter, is a picture that shows the family, and specifically the four people who loved me more than I deserved. Mom, for whom words will never describe the woman that she was. Dad, a man whom I never saw angry, even though my sons tell me that on occasion they saw him angry, and, as I mentioned before, a man who had God's own heart. My brother, a self-made man of integrity. My brother, a soft-spoken man who carried a big stick.

I'm there with my troubles, as I mentioned before, laughingly. Who would ever want to revisit and welcome their troubles of the

past? And as I think of her with a broken heart, I've been able to live with it and not let it go, because by the mind's eye I have been able to revisit the best years of my life. Yes, three short years in my 81 years, in which I have walked so many different paths; those years are ones never forgotten. I thank God and my Lord Jesus Christ, who has walked those paths with His hand on my shoulder, so often with me not realizing He was there. Those footprints in the sand were made by Him as He carried me through the life that He has allowed me to have.

If anything can be taken away from this writing, I would say: never give up on your dreams; be true to your dreams.

My one regret is that I did not pursue my first true love; one event after another stole time from us.

As I have covered my life from the start, and have possibly written my last chapter, friends and my sons have said, "Dad," "Ron, can you not slow down? Can you not rest? Can you not let others do what you want done?" The only answer I have for that is that I walked this path knowing my grandfather, who worked all the time, and knowing my dad, who either worked or had a project on the side or a secondary job for a short time to make sure we had everything we needed. Not wanted, but everything we needed. How do you compete against your DNA? Thanks, Grandpa; thanks, Grandma; thanks, Mom and Dad; thanks, Brother Denny. So the answer to those who ask is a big no. Forever in love.

I believe that the Lord showed me this in my namesake, the Hebrew name Aaron, which is where Ron comes from. Aaron, Moses's brother, at the Red Sea crossing, took the staff from Moses, whose arms were tired, and he lifted the staff to hold back the angry sea on both sides. I said early on that I felt the gift I had was that of encouragement, to help lift up people, and I believe I have been able to do this, and I thank God for all that He has done.

Our physical makeup is two ears and one mouth. Most of the time, all one person needs is for someone to listen to them; usually,

by speaking out, they can find so many answers on their own. As Paul Harvey would say at the end of his daily broadcast, "And that's the end of the story. Good day."