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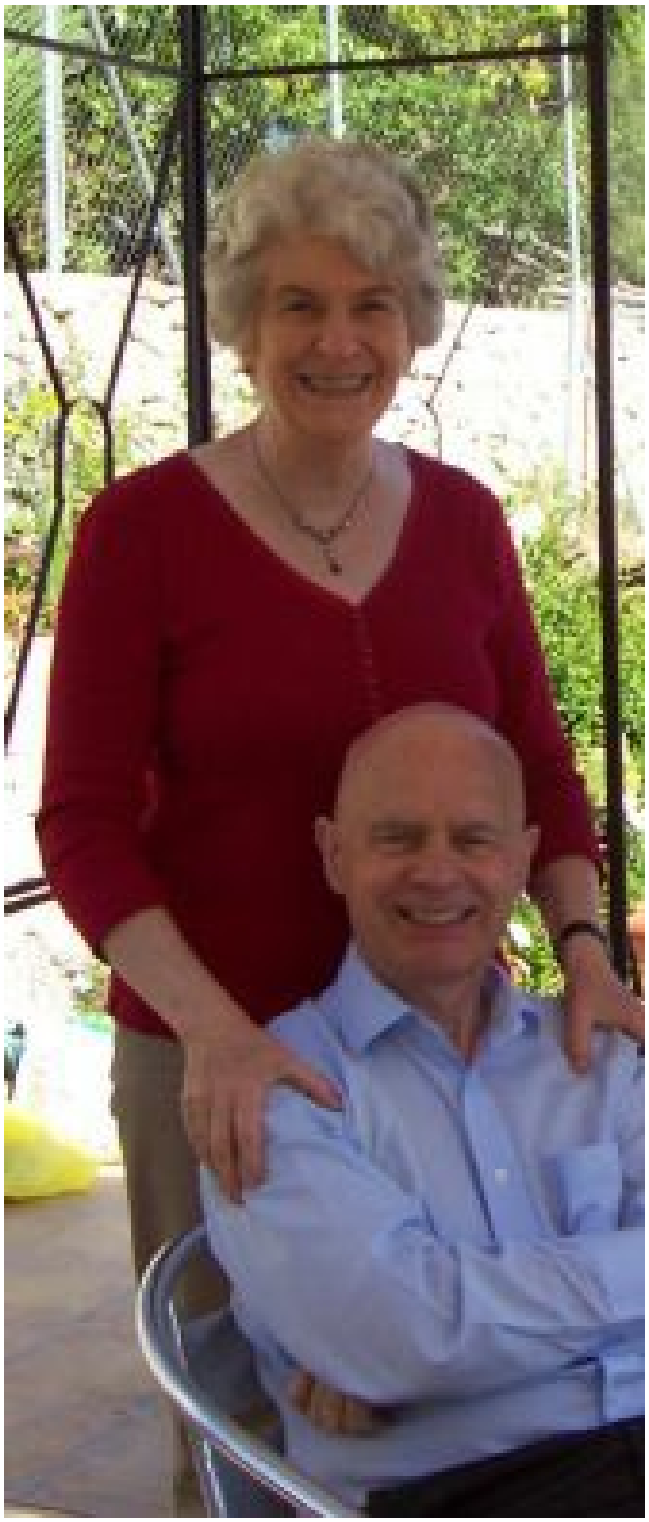
Thank You!

Hey, I'm really grateful to my wife, who was once a school teacher and is from Bonnie Scotland, for all the help given, the grammatical corrections etc and hard work of getting the book ready for publishing regards transferring my hand written copy, sometimes in 'Pidgin English', to the laptop…..and for going the extra mile!



My wife, Erika, and I in 2008 visiting friends in Spain

To the publishers for their helpful directives.

To my friends when I was 'out of circulation' for far too long (though no doubt my enemies were well pleased!)

If my three generations of children, family and friends want to know something of what my life was like and answer some of the questions they might have asked - well here it is. So I hope you - and all who are reading this of course - have a good read and find it helpful. It certainly took me long enough to live it and write it!! Things I saw and experienced and the era I lived in, even for the very 'hi de hi' atmosphere, were in one sense unique in the UK so I hope you learn from my mistakes and the positives and perhaps this

autobiography will make you think …..laugh….. and cry…..

Front cover picture: Warkworth Castle beside the River Coquet in Northumberland

1
Those Earlier Years

"Why did they have us if they didn't want us?!" exclaimed the older of my two brothers within the last several months. Very stable, hard-working and successful, well over forty years in the same job and house and certainly somewhat pastoral to me in my earlier years, as the first-born often tends to be among siblings. We are both in our sixties now, yet I had no idea that he was thinking so deeply about our early home/school situation. Rejection is a terrible curse for any one of us to cope with. Dealing with it and the like on life's journey to a place of decency, stability, normality and on to victory is what it is about. Let's set the scene then …

I was born in the Second World War in Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and had two older brothers and, with a gap, two younger sisters. Because 'the boys' were all born quite close to each other during the Second World War and 'the girls' in the early 'fifties, they have their own horror story to tell with differences from ours. Okay, I'll tell you my year of birth from the outset so you don't need to bother working it out … it was November, 1944. Now, to have a reality check is always a good idea. The more truth you can cope with and face, the better for you. It is always important and good and right that we honour our parents or the memory of them and as parents that we respect and pour encouragement and words of blessings (loving positives) continually over our children and their children - in spite of wrongs. In my own life I have seen so many things, had so much adventure - no wonder I later got burn-out; but battling on was all worth it for the experiences.

Both sets of grandparents were wealthy. My father's side lived in the Cullercoats area, then later in beautiful Warkworth, with its daunting

castle, on the Northumbrian coast. My Grandfather Field was an explosives merchant based in Newcastle, linked to the coal-mining industry, and as far as I can ascertain his assets included valuable properties, certainly one being Roxbro House, now a very popular Guest House and Listed Building, in the shadow of Warkworth Castle and in which, as far as I know, my father lived at some point in his life and was the first of six children who all did extremely well in life. My maternal grandparents lived in Monkseaton, near Whitley Bay, but later moved up to Jesmond in Newcastle, probably for the education of my mother and uncle. They had the Wholesale Grocery Firm 'Davison and Pickering' in Newcastle and that included a small sweet factory. My father became a G.P. The status and good standard of living were certainly there. Well, so far so good - doesn't all this sound brill? Born with a silver spoon in one's mouth and all that. Not so! My early years were like hell on earth much of the time.

My mother once told me that my father was virtually a genius and was a very good doctor and I know that when he put his 'plate' up on moving to Carlisle in 1951 and working only on his own he very quickly built up a large practice. Now my father had faults, and whatever his flaws were I can't make excuses for him. He has been gone several years now. As an adult I always desired that I could have had an ongoing normal friendly relationship with him, but this was not to be. Until the age of seventeen, I did relate in this way to my maternal grandfather, the times I saw him, although I had to be careful to always give courtesy and total respect. I took him as my 'paternal role model'. My sisters chose not to turn up at my father's funeral - such was the sadness of rejection from him. He had, I suspect, a very strict upbringing with a 'nanny' and servants, and had a good education. I understand in the little I know of him that his father wanted him to be part of the family business, but he wanted to be a doctor, and so it was his mother who financed him through medical school and he sold Rington's tea whenever! On one of my rare visits to see him in the early 'seventies, I showed him my forces' medal for being in a theatre of war, to which he responded, "Are you insured?" …! He went away for a few minutes and, returning, showed me a handful of

medals awarded to him for his time in the theatre of war in France. I know that one of my father's brothers, the youngest of the six, lost an eye at Dunkirk and was probably not even eighteen. 350,000 of our troops were evacuated from there at the very beginning of June 1940, but an awful lot of our troops and others at that time were also in that general area of France. They were under orders to retreat and get across to St. Nazaire on the Bay of Biscay, where about nineteen ships were waiting to take them to England - mostly Plymouth. Seemingly, the route was from Rouen and area down to Nantes, then to St. Nazaire, with Hitler's armies in hot pursuit to render them useless. Any awards for bravery etc my father would have got at this time and I only remember him ever making one reference to it, and that was about the nature of a certain sexual exploit.

Now one of the ships referred to was a former Cunard Cruise Liner, Lancastria, being used as a troop-ship because of the war. It was anchored five miles from St. Nazaire in the open sea and troops, refugees, RAF personnel and some women and children were being ferried out to her on 16th and 17th June 1940. My father was one of those on board as a RAMC Captain (Royal Army Medical Corps) and would have been 29 years old. Shortly before 1400 hrs, she was ready to sail, but did not do so. There have been many terrible maritime disasters and the Second World War had no shortage of them overall; but some say that what was about to unfold was the worst single-ship maritime disaster ever, even more so than the Titanic. At about 1400 hrs a German bomber came over her - a sitting duck - and bombed her. She was hit below the water line, though accounts say a bomb went down the funnel. She sank in about twenty minutes. The ship was built to hold about 2,000, but for some reason the number on board illegally far exceeded what was allowed. Estimates range from 6,000 … but it was more likely to have been nearer 9,000 souls. It was 'every man for himself', but not much good for the majority, especially those trapped below decks. It was estimated that about 2,800 were saved. There were acts of heroism, like the person who kept firing at the bomber until all the water had closed in on him as the ship went down, and one or two of cowardice, but no panic. One RAF

Officer was smartly dressed and coolly standing on the side of the ship smoking a cigarette, knowing that he had no chance as the ship was just about to go down … he could not swim. Some of our troops made it into the water, but had been ordered not to lose their kit or rifles, and, although some shouted, “Let your rifles and kit go!”, they refused, and drowned. The leaked fuel oil on the freezing water from the ship’s ruptured fuel tanks caused some havoc for those trying to swim, as did the German bomber firing at those in the water and trying to set the oil alight. My father told me that he was on the open deck shortly before the ship sank and he became momentarily detached from the situation, observing all the death and horror as if he was not part of it - and then he jumped into the freezing cold water of the open sea and on doing so fractured a rib that punctured one of his lungs. He still managed to get away from the sinking ship. He told me that a man was swimming furiously and pointing menacingly towards him, then stopped and looked at him and swam away. My father was wearing a life-jacket, but blood was gushing out of his mouth. He was rescued, of course, and taken to Plymouth, where he was in hospital for some time. By whichever means he managed to get his discharge from the army ...he got it!

The strange thing about the sinking of Lancastria is that the whole episode was clothed in secrecy and Winston Churchill put a 100-year stop on any of the true and exact details of it all becoming known. Was there something to hide? No official record of it has yet been published. In the interest of public morale, news of the loss was not given out, though the newspapers got hold of it by 26th July 1940 via the USA. I once met someone in the south of England who had been at a primary school in London with a roll of about 500 at the beginning of the war. He was off school one day with a cold and his school was bombed with not one survivor - this too was kept secret, yet resulted in the children in the cities throughout the land being sent to the countryside to live; and such was the national fight against an evil dictator.

A little later that year, my father met my mother and they got married on16th August 1940. I don’t think they had known each other very long at all - only days - which was typical of ‘live for today’, with all the horror

of a terrible world war. My father set up in General Practice in Penrith, Cumberland (now Cumbria), and also near the shipyard area of South Hylton, Sunderland. This was where, later on as a baby, I got a bad dose of whooping cough, which seriously affected my health, and also where, at about the age of three, I fell out of the front passenger seat of a car which my mother was driving. Though still scarred on my leg as evidence of this accident, I have no memory of it happening, but my mother told me that, by the time she managed to stop, the back wheel of the car was just about to go over my head. No seat belts or the like in those far-off days and only about a quarter of a turn downwards on the inside chrome door handle was enough to open the door. I know that many of you will have had near-death experiences to tell of and the pain that can come with them makes me think that not only are we so often on borrowed time, but how fragile life really is and worth appreciating.

Well, my father came into a lot of money and I think it must have been on the death of his father, probably in 1948. I think I have an early memory of sitting on a four-poster bed at the time of, or shortly before, my grandfather's death, with family members around; but I have no way of knowing if that's true. Anyway, the family moved up to the beautiful village and area of Humshaugh (not far from Hexham) in the North Tyne Valley, where my father went as a country doctor. The word 'haugh' means the flat land beside a river - not sure whether 'hums' could mean homes - it's anyone's guess! Nearby was Haughton Castle. That general area is richly steeped in history, where the battle was fought by Oswald and his army at the top of Brunton Bank at 'Heavenfield', where he defeated a much larger army under the pagans, Cadwallon and Penda, in 635AD, which cemented Christianity in England. Also, it is on the Roman Wall, started in 122AD by Hadrian, with the fort and barracks of 'Chesters' that the Romans had built just next to the River Tyne, and the layout is still there to this day and is now part of the National Heritage. The crossing over the North Tyne is called Chollerford - it has had a bridge for a long time, of course, and is right next to the George Hotel. That area has to be one of the most picturesque of places, not least because of the shape of one valley, with its stretch of lush green

vegetation and the open spaces of the farm fields. Now, much to my delight, it had a single-track railway running by the south side of the Tyne, until 1956 for passengers and 1958 for freight. Parts of where the line ran are still visible. I like trains and planes and for many years whenever I dreamt of that railway line or of its memory, it was always a pleasant dream!

My father bought and owned outright Linden House, towards the top of Humshaugh Village, with its beautiful views across the North Tyne Valley. No doubt that property, with its views, on today's market would be worth an absolute fortune. My mother told me that I used to go down the drive on my 'trike' and straight out onto the road (very quiet in those days) and more than once evidently nearly gave the bus driver a heart attack!

On one occasion my parents left paint and a paint brush beside the large garage doors and for me it was - paint a stroke or two then have a trip down the driveway and back up on my trike and so on until I was discovered, of course. Now that's what I call living dangerously but creatively!! On another occasion, as a pre-schooler, I asked for some money for the village shop and went and bought with my threepenny coin some plums … stoopid! … my parents had just *sold* them to the shop from the orchard … this was much to the mirth of the village!

At one time my mother said I was not eating very well … only to discover I was visiting old ladies in the village and being fed gingerbread and lemonade or whatever was on the menu for a 'just visiting 4-year-old'! We kept hens and at one time pigs as well. There was an interesting book printed in 2000 entitled Humshaugh, Portrait of a Northumberland Village, giving some good historical background, local information and recent local social history, with a lot of pictures submitted by locals for locals or whoever. My father is mentioned by name in the book, but the year he left is not, on the page where it listed the doctors for most of the last century. Now this is stranger than fiction. Surely my father had a bright, long future as a country doctor in that area - my mother was still only in her late twenties in 1948 - both hard-working with status, wealth, two cars and the best of everything at that time; yet it was cut off after

about three years and we moved to Carlisle. I have often wondered why…?

The comparison between the village doctor then and now is quite something. Now they have teams in Health Centres, but in those days they had to be ready for anything on their own, though that was in 1948, about the time the NHS came into being. At that time in Humshaugh, the surgery was on the side of Linden House and, as a toddler, I once got into the 'dispensary part' of it and caused a panic, until I was hurriedly and safely taken out. My father would take medicine around with him in his car boot when on his rounds, i.e. when visiting patients, and if someone, for example, was cut, he would sew them up in their own home. It was a heavy workload and quite some responsibility. In 1991, as a single parent, I took my son to visit the Roman Fort at Chesters and we went up into the village of Humshaugh and into the shop. I explained about the time I had lived there with my family and the shopkeeper said to me, "Well, I don't remember that era, but my mother does and, in fact, the very old ladies in the village still talk about that time." It was as if they were always asking, "What really happened?" To me that said it all.

I have an early childhood memory of visiting a farm and playing by a stream. There was something I wanted to tell my mother, so I ran back to the farmhouse, which had a stable door into the kitchen. I burst in, only to find my mother in the arms of the farmer. I was very surprised, as they were too! Whatever was happening at that time was really serious and sad. Did both of my parents have a moral problem? Was there immorality, family breakdown, suicide, prison even for some farmers, and was it all fuelled by alcohol abuse? I still wonder! When I saw some of those very early episodes of 'All Creatures Great and Small' and 'Hi De Hi' they captured something of what it was like to be a part of those times, whether the vet, doctor or farmers, etc, especially with those well off in society then. Even at an early age in Humshaugh I was already witnessing domestic violence, which became steadily worse.

With my brothers I got to know where most of the country pubs were, as we would be given lemonade and crisps in the car while waiting outside. 'Hi De Hi?' Well, a little later on my father bought …. or was he

sold? … cars he really did not like. One of those was an Armstrong Sydney - with a powerful engine, a two-door but large, heavy car. It was in the early ’fifties; one summer holiday the family set off to Butlin’s Holiday Camp in Pwllheli, North Wales. Now my father needed a rest, but was he going to get one? … I think not! Seated on the back seat, we children had to be careful not to put a foot wrong. It was a hot day and over the hills near our destination my mother and father started fighting. He pulled over, stopped the car and started to slap her hard around the face. I can still remember the helplessness and the fear. It wasn’t exactly a happy holiday. It was an ex-army camp - and that probably not too long before - regimented even from the early morning and the food was not of a high standard. The holiday was laughable afterwards, especially as some of the early episodes of the TV series were fairly accurate and really recaptured the atmosphere. It belonged to another era, so to actually experience it was quite something.

But something far worse was just around the corner for me. As each of ‘the boys’ became five years old we were sent off to Boarding School(s) …. these were the cruel years…

2
The 'Fifties - The School Years

At some point in the early part of 1950, I joined my two brothers, at the tender age of five, at Jesmond Preparatory Boarding School, which had, because of the war, moved out to Spennymoor, County Durham, from Newcastle. It was a medium-sized nice country house with attractive grounds and, although the head teacher and his wife were quite pleasant, in comparison with other teachers later on, the strictness was there and our parents had paid a lot of money, so they had to deliver the goods. Though not everyone agrees, I would never say that boarding schools are right or wise, as they take you out of a hopefully normal family environment into an abnormal situation. Whatever the benefits, it sends the message of rejection. How do you know who or what is really influencing your child? A child will not normally tell a parent or guardian of the abuse suffered. My parents sent me, but my spirit broke within me. No matter in those first hours what the staff did, I was inconsolable, sobbing and sobbing, probably for a whole day or even more. They isolated me (this is always a tactic of the enemy - isolate and destroy), but fortunately for me they were patient and did not use corporal punishment straight away. They brought to me what I thought was a fried egg, but I refused to eat it. I realised in later years that it was, in fact, peaches and cream or Carnation milk! - they were being kind, even though there was still a food shortage, five years after the Second World War ended.

However they achieve it, they mould you into the situation at any cost and do not send you back to your family. A broken spirit weakens the life within you (not to be confused with breaking the will) - it may make you more pliable to obedience - but it will destroy some measure of the creativity within you, the strength to fight and often causes one to go into

‘escape mechanism’ in order to cope. My parents were making a classic mistake in the way they sent us off to school: a mixture of bowing down at the shrine of knowledge and intellect but at what cost!? … choosing someone else to instil in their children various disciplines such as courtesy, manners, time-keeping, obedience etc … even to the stiff British upper lip if you like over and against the health, strength, joy and hopefully fun of the ‘place of life’ - a proper stable family where correct order and values are all in place but there is acceptance and loving kindness from the father and mother to and amongst the children. It is by example, what they actually are and do, that we follow our parents or guardians and not, in the end, by what they say or tell us to do. If being sent off from home at an early age is simply to get children out from under their parents’ feet, a form of rejection, what kind of signal does that send to the children’s hearts? Mixed messages bring confusion to the soul. Interestingly enough, the Christian Brethren Denomination had a policy throughout the land that they would never send their children to boarding school … they got it right! To put a ‘you must work in order to be accepted’ ethic will also bring confusion as it sends out wrong signals. Only loving kindness and unconditional acceptance and the order they bring will work. In the biography William Grimshaw of Howarth, by Faith Cook, she tells of Grimshaw sending his two children, after his wife had died, to John Wesley’s School in Bristol, where there was a strict regime for the children with no recreational time or home visiting during their period of education. The routine must have been punishing, though perhaps not harsh. Jane, William Grimshaw’s daughter, became ill and died, aged twelve, in 1750, after being there fifteen months; so I suspect the cause may have been a broken heart and spirit. Grimshaw withdrew his son very soon afterwards and his son was greatly troubled later in life. No doubt the school had a detrimental effect, along with other factors. In my opinion there is no substitute for being with one’s own good, healthy, loving family, even though I have met one or two people over the years who actually liked boarding school.

Whatever happened as regards that first boarding school - I don’t know the times or reason why - it was fairly short-lived. I think it may

have totally closed down in 1951, possibly due to the retirement of the owner. No doubt something to do with my father's move to Carlisle was the reason for my two brothers and myself being moved to Hayton House School, at the top end of Hayton Village, about seven miles east of Carlisle. If I was looking for 'fried eggs' here, I certainly wasn't going to find any!! Nice area though: posh and picturesque. There was a farm immediately to the back of the country house, which was set in its own grounds of lawns and bushes, with fields and woods nearby. Some of the time there was weekly boarding - the great luxury of escaping at weekends to witness the escalating violence at home! But there was a good measure of violence at the school as well - the headmaster ruled with the cane and fear; in fact, it seemed like I never saw him without the cane. I would describe him as an unstable, very sick man game-playing on an ego-trip … warped and dangerous.

Now I don't have a problem with discipline, even minimal corporal punishment, if administered fairly and genuinely deserved for deliberate rebellion or harm to another and bringing order, peace and equity in its wake, but now at six years old and onward I began to witness and experience corporal punishment at the whim of the powers-that-be, without any check or control; but when it was administered because of not being able to understand or do the school work required, then I drew the line. I would fight back in protest or seek to beat them at their own game if possible. But what of the positive aspects of Hayton House School? The village and countryside walks were of outstanding beauty. I heard Teresa Brewer's 'Music, Music, Music' for the first time in the older boys' common room and I was hooked! I got to do some horse riding as part of lessons - don't think the horse had much life in it, but it was still good fun! I dread to think what they were charging my father! The headmaster had a big American car with a 'dickie' (two seats just above the boot that opened outwards - not part of the inside of the car) and once or twice I got to ride in it! On the infrequent visits allowed into the village itself, I got a sighting of 'Stephanie', and that made my day - she was an attractive mid-teenager with a ponytail!

A young graduate teacher from Wales joined the teaching staff of

Hayton House School and he was a fair man who had a teaching gift. As far as I know, Hayton House School bought out Grosvenor College School in Carlisle, a fee-paying school which had enjoyed a good reputation and was in the general area of where my parents had bought a fair-sized Victorian property in St George's Crescent. Hayton House closed and the building was later demolished. For me it was a day school now, rather than boarding, and that was good. There were still some boarders at Grosvenor College School, but mostly day pupils and interestingly enough within a few years the young graduate teacher became the owner and headmaster and the former headmaster was demoted. The change-over of schools would have been in 1952 and the regime was still quite harsh. My father became the school doctor.

Back to St George's Crescent … No 10 had a bad atmosphere and no doubt the servants' quarters were 'haunted'! By 1952 we had a television with only BBC and that was one part-time channel. We had a Bendix automatic washing machine, which was a real luxury as they weren't even made in the UK at that time. Sadly, despite all the luxuries, at home there was still that increase in parental domestic violence as my father continued to give my mother a rough time. There was a pattern to it during the next few years and, although it could erupt at any time, it nearly always did on a Sunday night. One of us would be ordered by my father to go to the boot of the car and bring bottles of beer up. Later, he might go a bit silly and sing a Tyneside song or something, then suddenly I would get kicked off to bed and he would turn on Mother and words of hate and violence that could last minutes or hours would erupt. When it got really bad, I would put the pillow over my head and sing until it all went quiet. Sometimes, if Father had gone to bed, I would venture down to see Mother, who was in recovery time. If that was late in the night, I would have a drink and something to eat - but was still not allowed to say anything of the situation - not easy to cope with the emotional and mental pain, especially if the next day was a school day. If the phone rang after mid- night, as my father was then back 'on call', everything would change that second. He would be given black coffee to drink and put his suit on, compose himself and go off to the patient's house. 'Oh the games

people play now …'! I soon realised, if she was driving her car with sunglasses on, that my mother was hiding bruises on her face, perhaps around her eyes. On one occasion I came back from an outing to find my mother laid out on the floor between the hallway and dining room, where she must have lain for some time, beaten unconscious. The rules of the game were that I was not allowed to interfere but to keep out of the way and be quiet. Interestingly enough, my mother would never allow any of us to say anything bad about our father - and quite rightly so.

It was probably in early 1953, after one of my mother's suicide attempts, that I visited her in an Edinburgh hospital, for it was compulsory in those days for anyone to be checked out as such after a suicide attempt. There were Social Workers called in and I know that a little later on I was made a 'ward of the court'. My brothers and I were attending day school at Grosvenor College while mother was gone. The elder of my brothers and I decided one morning we would go to the State School, round a couple of corners or so, and this we did that very morning! My father agreed to our request, perhaps because it would save him some pennies. It was so strange to be in a classroom with girls! I have no memory of the exact dates of these happenings, but reckon I had probably turned eight. All I can remember is that one morning my father made me go to school in jodhpurs … the hard- wearing, horse-riding trousers … Er … I liked John Wayne, but this was going a bit too far!! How do you find a corner of the playground and remain inconspicuous in riding breeches?! I got round it somehow, but my self- esteem sure was being tested! It was short-lived anyway - only a few weeks - Mother was coming home and my brother and I were being made ready for yet another boarding school … no expense spared - the best of wooden tuck boxes made to order, clothes, school uniform, with every item name-labelled, etc, red school blazers - red … for danger?! I have no recollection of how long I was at this next school, but would hazard a guess that it was just under three years, spanning the years 1953-56, from age eight to eleven.

The school was called 'Holt School' and was situated at Jardine Hall, a large country house, a few miles to the north of Lockerbie in Scotland,

not far from the River Annan or the main Glasgow-Carlisle road and railway line. To get there by road from Lockerbie you had to go by 'Devil's Bridge', which kind of said a lot as well! The school was so evil and depraved I doubt whether you would have found much worse in the UK, even at borstals or public schools, apart from the horror of sexual abuse. While the elder of my brothers and I went off to Holt School, my other brother stayed at the day school in Carlisle. I think my sense of adventure was kind of working against me!

My brother could be quite tough when he wanted to be, but as time went by at Holt School, when returning to it after holidays, sometimes my parents would put us on the train in Carlisle Station and my brother would leg it down to the other end of the corridor and jump out! … and sometimes, when they took us in one of the cars, guess who was in the boot when they set off, alone, for the return journey? - yes, my bro! Pure genius, I call it … well … except for the parental wrath bit! My policy was to at least try and keep one lot of the main players on your side and that wasn't the school … who knows? … it might just pay off in the end.

It was a harsh regime with total control day and night, apart from some free time on Saturdays. I considered my options to run for it and only on one occasion did so - I ran through the woods for about half a mile or so, then chickened out and ran back. No one knew I had gone. I decided I may not be clever enough to survive at nine years old. There were probably only about thirty pupils in the whole school and I think I was the youngest. Everything was done in regimentation and by the bell. At 8am we would be lined up in the dormitory, the room tidy, us washed and dressed, ready to walk down to the dining room for breakfast. If at this point I was used as a punch bag or spoken to with evil intent, then I knew it was going to be a bad day; but if they picked on someone else … well … I would not join in, but just keep things quiet and as low key as possible. I had a lady teacher, not too old, who could generally hold discipline without corporal punishment - but she had a short fuse on anger. Not so the other staff. My brother told me on the first day of term that one of the older boys was told by his teacher to get into the classroom for he had just got a new cane and wanted to try it out - and so

it was! The unwritten law was ‘no telling tales and no complaining’; good qualities as such, but only if things are normal.

My other brother joined us a bit later on, probably in late 1953 or early ’54, around the time of the birth of the younger of my two sisters. He had to take a lot of bullying and cruelty and was not the type to retaliate - damage was done and so life was going to be hard. We each had our own ‘corner’ to hold and so could not help one another. I longed for there to be fairness and justice. As the weeks and months rolled by, even mealtimes were regimented, like the habit of clearing away whatever at your table, as required, in the middle of a meal. That habit, based on fear, remained with us and later, to the annoyance of wives, we would get up in the middle of a meal and start clearing away in preparation for the next stage of the meal. Being in the countryside was again some compensation and the Sunday afternoon long walks could be okay; also the long holidays - a month at Christmas and at Easter, then eight weeks in summer - complete freedom! - no restrictions, apart from to tell my mother where I was.

There were at least two incidents at the school that brought some change. The regime seemed to have whims to do things, but they didn’t work or last. They made me play rugby - no chance, not my scene. It was difficult to avoid having to join in, but somehow I managed it. So then it was football. That was easy ……. take no regard for the rules whatsoever, keep completely away from the other lads at any cost and definitely from the ball, and, when you find a quiet corner of the pitch, enjoy the quiet of it for however long it lasts. If the ball did come my way, I legged it to the other side of the pitch. You see, there was not much else they could do to me, apart from torture unto death - the regime and the bullies knew that. Another time on a Saturday morning I had to scrub stairs and passageways, but I really struggled as I felt near exhaustion, and coping with the constant mental and emotional pain of life was becoming too much.

I liked swimming and cycling and, later in life, tennis. I liked mixing, but would deliberately be a loner as much as I could just to survive, though I was starting to lose my fight for that survival. I was reaching the

limit of what a child could take and remain normal. As I look back, I realise that my body was just starting the process of closing itself down, due to all that had happened. I was constantly getting flu and feeling lethargic. I was starting to stoop and have round shoulders. The regime's answer was to treat the symptoms and not the root by putting a book or books on my head in the presence of one of the thugs … whoops, sorry! … masters … giving verbal abuse and fear as I had to walk around a room - and not have the books fall off.

Suddenly, during the middle of a term, I was taken out of lessons up to Lockerbie Railway Station and put on the train to Carlisle. I thought my birthday and Christmas had come in one! They gave me x-rays and various tests at the Cumberland Infirmary and later put me on iron and some other tablets. It was Spring/Summer time and I was taken off with my father on a week's holiday to Edinburgh to stay in a hotel. Much of the time it seemed I was left on my own, but I didn't care - it was a quiet, brill time. That was the time when Norman Wisdom's film 'Man of the Moment' came out. I saw it and it was a good laugh. I was still unable to relate to my father in a genuine friendly way, but at least we both had a rest.

Meanwhile … back at the regime! … a couple of things happened. I was probably about ten, so it was either late 1954 or into '55 when I observed two incidents which had a really bad effect on me. One night in the dormitory, in which there were six of us, two of the lads decided to sort out one of the others after 'lights out' - that alone was asking for trouble! They took one of their dressing gown cords and loosely tied it around his genitals, then each took an end and pulled as hard as they could with great glee, while he writhed in sheer agony. I can still remember where I was standing next to my bed, horrified, looking on. I can also still remember the victim's name. He suffered quite badly at the hands of his persecutors, but was still intact with no blood showing when suddenly Matron burst in, carrying her wide, thick leather strap. Without asking any questions, she beat each one of us several times as hard as she could, so the poor boy had to suffer again at the hand of this wretched woman, instead of receiving the help that he needed. Why did they want

to do what they did? Later on in life, I thought it must have been because he constantly wet his bed. I could only describe Matron as an evil, vicious little tyrant, devoid of any love, mercy, feelings, kindness or compassion. She was the black, bitter icing on the regime's cake of evil and wickedness.

The second incident occurred one day in the 'Telephone Room' on the ground floor (servants' area), a sort of small cave with no windows or door. There was a 'Press Button A' on the front of the machine if connected by the operator or 'B' on the side of the machine if no connection was made and you got your money back. It wasn't out of bounds, but I don't know why I was in there at that time. I suddenly heard a great noise and commotion and the rest of the school together walked by in the corridor only a few feet away on a sort of rampage, making a very noisy protest, some beckoning me to join them. 'No way' - and they passed by. I was filled with great fear, knowing there could be a terrible price for us all to pay. After all, the regime was into power and money in a big way and would not easily let it go. I felt so ill. Should I leg it? No, it might make things worse. I felt so weak and decided to report to Matron, who had absolutely no compassion, but at least it got me off the hook. A little later that afternoon, I was outside one of the classrooms on my own when one of the masters, holding a cane, came with one of the older boys - no doubt the ringleader - roughly getting him into the classroom, shutting the door and barricading it with desks and whatever. With the solidity of the building and iron bars on the windows, there was no escape. There were no shouts or words, but as the cane was continuously wielded there was obviously a physical fight going on. I was shouting and banging on the door for them to stop, but to no avail. It raged on for a long time into the late afternoon - over one hour and probably nearly two - that's my memory of it, anyway. Okay, some may thrive on violence and that lad sure must have been tough, but he must have been very badly beaten and marked, to say nothing of the lasting emotional/mental damage to him. By this time I was sinking and thought, "I've got to take some action". What were my options? If I could have told, by telephone, my maternal grandparents in Newcastle, they would have done something

no doubt; but I didn't have their number or any money. If I had been a bit older I would have organised myself and run for it - I knew roughly where there was water from the Sunday walks and where the trains would have stopped at signals towards Lockerbie. They wouldn't have found me for some time, but with only some sweets as food I ruled it out. No, I had to get a secret letter to my parents. After all, surely even my father, with all his sexual prowess, had to draw the line at the knowledge that one half of the school could emasculate the other half and that could include his three sons for whose 'privileged education' he was paying a fortune; also that corporal punishment was being administered without bounds.

Now, letters home were written on a Sunday. We were told what to put and they had to be perfect; however, I wrote a letter and what a total mess it was - untidy, etc. Remember, in those days the norm was to use a pencil or a nib-pen that you dipped into ink, so this urgent letter was written, put in an envelope with a stamp, but there was no post box or means of getting to one outside, so I had no choice but to put it in the wooden post box within the school for all letters. I really believed it would be sent off in the mail, but of course it was not. Nobody said anything, but it must have been enough to turn the tables and cause fear in the regime that their game could be up - not only for me to have the school closed down but to get them in the News of The World as well. The holidays would be around sooner or later anyway and so I could have taken some action then. I'm not sure how long it took till I was placed in another dormitory with only three beds and not one bully in sight. I thought I had arrived in Heaven!

I would guess the above took place in the latter half of 1955, and within the early part of 1956 the three of us were pulled out of that school, suddenly … or so it seemed to me. My mother told me later that she fully realised something was wrong when my middle brother, who had always liked school as such, now hated it and that was why she pulled us out. A year or so later, the school closed! Justice? - there always is, sooner or later. About forty years later, I spent a day looking at where the three main schools I attended had been - the one in Carlisle … houses were built there … the one at the top of Hayton Village was now a field;

then, after a search for Holt School, that is Jardine Hall, I was told, “The roof fell in - it’s been gone a few years”. When eventually I found the place, I observed that trees were growing where there had been fields, lawns and bushes and at the place where the actual buildings had stood was quite a large mound that resembled a new grave. I only recognised the place by a wall that was at the back of the school. “It is enough,” I thought.

So it was back to Day School at Grosvenor College, Carlisle, and, apart from one nasty incident at the end of a school swimming lesson at Carlisle City Baths, when a much older boy tried to drown me, to the point of me just beginning to take in water, things were quite calm. The regime there could be overly strict, but I did my best and was generally left alone. The former Welsh graduate, as mentioned earlier, was now the ‘Head’ and the owner of the school and this was for the better. The large ‘baby bulge’ at the beginning of the Second World War was growing up and around 1956/57 most of them would be leaving school, and there were few, if any, boarders left by 1958. By later in 1959, it was basically a Junior School only, with just four or perhaps five in my class, and that was the entire top end of the school of fourteen years and over. From 1956, vast changes were in store on the home front!

3
Meanwhile … Back on the Home Front

It was probably one day in 1956 that I was standing at the bottom of the steps which led up to the front door at 10 St George's Crescent in Carlisle, when my father came down the steps on his way to take a surgery or whatever and all he said to me loudly and clearly was, "If I catch you smoking I'll kill you!" I gave him eye-contact and never answered him a word, but took an inner vow: "You never will" … and he never did! I always presumed he was a man who kept his word, so later would not take any chances; but the strange thing was, he had only given up smoking himself a year or so earlier. It was round about that time that he walked out on his whole family. It was suddenly more peaceful at home, but soon there would not be enough money to maintain the standard of living we had been used to, especially in and for the upkeep of a large Victorian property, which he still owned, of course. What were the reasons for his leaving home? My maternal grandmother had died suddenly and I think he had been afraid of her, so he may then have seen the way as clear. Also, I don't think he liked the idea of his three sons growing up, as they might one day soon stand up to him when he was in the wrong.

There was an event one lunchtime before he left home. Only my parents and I were present in the home and my mother had prepared a really nice meal for the three of us. We all had our own chair and place round a large solid dining-room table. Suddenly, my father picked up his whole plateful of food and threw it at my mother. Fortunately, it missed her. Words followed, so I went to push him out of the way from near my

mother. It was a protest more than anything else and I certainly was not looking to be aggressive, violent or disrespectful. He easily pushed me to one side against the mantelpiece and left the room. This action of mine that lunchtime went against everything I had been taught and I knew it was wrong as such, but surely somebody had to do something!?

There was a strange emptiness in the home with my father gone - almost an eeriness, with pluses and minuses. It was a lot more peaceful and Sundays became bearable. The timing was right for me as my adjustment from childhood to adulthood was beginning. I had missed out on a normal childhood and was *still* very much a loner, though at heart a 'people person', but survived. Through the schools I had learnt not to look back or wallow in the past, but rather look ahead to the end of a difficult situation as in 'light at the end of the tunnel'. Thinking about role models, parental and same-sex, to get you through those crucial, difficult adolescent years … if mine, parentally, was not what it should have been - okay, I got through!? As for same-sex … well, that role modelling was on one or two of the older boys at that last all-male school, and this got me healthily through that stage, leading up to more seriously looking for girls by the time I was thirteen and therefore able to correctly adjust, in spite of what I saw in the bushes behind the shed in the school grounds.

A parental divorce followed, which was a long drawn-out and messy affair, with the unpleasantness divorces generally cause. As time went by, my mother attracted some male friends. It was around this time that I started to enjoy reading a strange combination of Enid Blyton, the Sunday newspapers, comics, and, from the dining room bookshelves, some of my father's medical books … but with no desire to be a medic through a picture of someone with smallpox! - aargh - it was terrible! Now my desire was to leave school and be grown up. I guess I thought that this would put me more in control of my own life and destiny and that things would therefore be better. It was probably now 1957 and that's when one particular man visited regularly, one or two evenings a week, and we would all play card games. Smoking and drinking were part of the scene, even for me. I went with the flow and felt more 'grown up', though was

this wise? By 1958 I was addicted to nicotine. “How stupid can you get?” - taking a lot of my money and not doing my health any good! - and certainly by 1959 would have a drink of whisky or beer, but was never all that bothered about it or ever addicted to alcohol. Then there was another man and a trip in a luxurious Jaguar back to the Humshaugh area and later news of his unpleasant death. Don’t dwell on the past unless it can be changed for the better in the future. Take it as it comes, look for the good things and times - keep your peace and don’t ask too many questions, if any at all. This was my way of working.

One day, my mother was looking out of the large bay window of the sitting room, which gave a fairly good elevated view of part of ‘the crescent’. She beckoned me over and said, “Do you see that man over there?” “Yes,” I replied. The man was standing, leaning against a tree, reading a newspaper. “That’s a private detective your father has hired so that he can get information against me for the divorce.” “Do you want me to do anything?” I asked. “No, we’ll just leave it,” she replied. A little bit of time went by and one day when at school I was suddenly ordered to go to the headmaster’s study. Usually, in times past, that meant there was something wrong and would result in the use of his cane. I knocked on the door and was told to enter, close the door and sit down. Well, guess who was there with the headmaster - it was none other than the private detective! I was introduced and told he was going to ask some questions for me to answer. First of all though, I was impressed by the headmaster’s study and had a good look at it! It was the absolute tops in antique leather furniture … but I was not so impressed by what was to follow. I was grilled for some time on everything that was going on at home, while the questioner made notes of my replies, and he wanted all the details. It was a terrible mental and emotional ordeal. On the one hand, my mother was my friend and I did not want to say anything against her, but I would not tell any lies. On the other hand, to receive the headmaster’s, the detective’s or my father’s wrath would not be a good idea! I gave some information but am sure that in the end I frustrated the detective with my deliberate lack of details as I became more and more disgusted with myself for agreeing to say anything at all! Actually, I felt

that the headmaster was appalled at what was happening and would have stopped it taking place had there not been such strong connections with my father to the school socially, financially and as the school doctor. He must have known for some time of the problems that I had had at home - after all, seemingly half of Carlisle knew by then! - but now he had his eyes fully opened. He was a single gentleman and I suspect he did not realise what a dysfunctional family was really like or the extent to which it might affect a child's behaviour and ability to concentrate or learn. From that day on I felt he treated me more respectfully and leniently by making compassionate allowances. He maintained discipline but never again gave me the cane, but I can't say the same for the warped assistant headmaster, although I discovered later he was one of my father's patients, and was really messed up. I went home straight after school on the day of the detective's visit and relayed the entire episode to my mother. She contacted her solicitor like lightning and the detective was soon out of the picture!

An incident at school shortly after that went in my favour. A maths teacher, an 'ex-head' who was fairly old, joined the staff. Nearly all the time he picked his nose and stuck the 'bogey-men' under his desk in full view of us all. One day he was trying to teach me something but I could not grasp what it was and told him politely. His answer was to tell me to put my hand out and he hit it as hard as he could with a ruler. I took it, but said to myself, "That will be the last time you do that to me, for you don't know how to teach." Within a day or so the same thing began to happen again and he told me to put my hand out. At that point I said, "No", turned on my heels, left the classroom, collected my coat and went home, knowing it was a very dangerous thing to do, as it could have resulted in being caned or even expelled. I told my mother, though I was not making an issue of it. Amazingly, nothing was said, but about two weeks later the teacher was gone.

Well, time went by and daily life consisted mostly of school, homework, helping my mother in any way I could with ironing, cleaning or cooking and helping to look after my two younger sisters. The emotional, mental or whatever pain of my childhood was catching up as I

entered adolescence. I suffered from frequent bouts of flu-like illness and struggled to cope with my lessons, including learning anything by rote when required. I managed to cope, but it took me a great deal of effort and time, which was not always permitted. I was determined to obtain some GCE 'O-levels', even if that had to be achieved in a place other than school. There were still a few boarders or weekly boarders at the school until boarding stopped, probably early in 1958. School finished at 3.30, but often I would just stay behind and mix with the boarders, do my homework there and after an evening meal with them, by invitation of the headmaster, go home around 6.30 or 7pm. This continued until the summer holiday of '58.

Now I would do any shopping or run any errands my mother asked of me, including going for her drink to a local off-licence attached to a nearby pub. I have no memory of the exact dates of events which followed or even of which year, but would guess late 1957 or into '58. Nobody visited my mother any more. I think the divorce had gone through and, as I understand it, this is when we were made wards of court. The authorities were keeping an eye on the situation until each of us reached the age of sixteen. My mother became much quieter and didn't go out any more. She didn't seem to be taking much care of herself and seemed to be spending most of her time in her dressing gown. Then one day when I was at home, she suddenly shouted to me, "Quick, run. Go and get Dr Raleigh. I need help!" I ran the 150 yards or so to his house and surgery and he was available and immediately came up. I was perplexed and puzzled. The penny had still not dropped. Sometimes we believe what we want to believe and see what we want to see. I semi-hid in the garage with one of the doors slightly open, from where I could just see one side of the bottom of the front steps. An ambulance was called and my mother was taken away - WITH THE BABY! My mother was a little bit plump normally, but how on earth did I miss it? I was angry with myself for a day or two. Why hadn't I realised and I could have helped and supported her more? Being around twelve might be an excuse. As she told me afterwards, she refused to set eyes on the child, even when they brought her to her in hospital, for if she had looked at her baby she knew she

would probably not have been able to let her go; so the child was immediately adopted. In those days there was certainly a stigma attached to people being born out of wedlock, whether by society and/or the church. Now that didn't register with me. Surely all babies are lovely and all life is precious. Everyone is worthy of being given a chance. My maternal grandfather was still alive, living in Newcastle, and he sent my mother flowers to the hospital - indicative of the fact that he would stand by her. Well, it was no crime to have a baby, so my mother was back home after a day or two. She said that by giving up the child for adoption she felt that the child would have a better chance in life than with her and that the adopting parents should have the privilege of naming the baby. No, I never ever dared ask my mother who the father of the child was, but sometimes wondered - she did not say. I would have my own private guess - I think I know - but that's all. I think the baby escaped from what might have been a lot of trauma in her childhood. Was that the end of it? No way! There were two things in all of this that almost bordered on the hauntingly supernatural.

To 'fast forward' for a moment. Firstly, about thirty years later, when on one of my quarterly visits to see my mother in Carlisle from my home, at that time in West Yorkshire, she started talking and wondering about the child she had had adopted all those years ago. She was still haunted by what she had done - upset with feelings of guilt and heartache, so I said I would start to pray earnestly that contact would be made and that my mother would find out how her daughter was and the matter would be settled. I think it was within three months that my mother phoned me, excitedly, as a lady called Christine had just phoned her from the south of England. Yes, she was the daughter she had never set eyes on. She had had a good upbringing and was generally doing well in life. Communication by telephone and post followed but, as far as I know, they never actually met. Nevertheless, mother was then content regarding the subject.

The second matter was with regard to my father. I think he may have wanted to blame my mother within their divorce paperwork so as to make it sound good for him. Why bother, when divorces are so horrible and sad

anyway? A year or two had passed and I heard he had remarried. More time passed and by then I was married with a daughter and spent a winter in the early to mid-'sixties living between two caravans owned by my father at different locations outside Carlisle. My father had a lady friend, his then wife's best friend, and was visiting her in Carlisle - no problem - nothing to do with me - I'll mind my own business, I thought. Hmmmmm … a bit difficult. Would I drive around in his familiar 'doctor's car' in Carlisle wearing his cap as a decoy, supposedly 'doing his patient visits'?! Not keen, but I agreed … did that once or twice … until I suddenly moved back to Newcastle to live. Yes, there was later a lovely little baby boy, and amazingly he was called Christopher! It was, if you like, balanced up equally on both parental sides, even down to the same root Christian name of my half-sister and half-brother.

My father later left his second wife but never divorced her and spent the last twenty-odd years of his life in a 'common law marriage'. I was even told in later years of another half-brother elsewhere. One could say my father liked his drink, until he had to give it up for health reasons in his old age. He once took me out in about 1964 and got me paralytic drunk … never again … I was not impressed with either one of us! Back to that song 'Oh, the games people play now …'. Couple it with 'Do you want to be in my gang, my gang, my gang?'... and it is interesting how it sums up so much of human relationships, not least when there is so much hypocrisy with game-playing. Does fairness, as in the full sense of equity and truth, really exist? Is life really about joining in the games people play … (or else!) … and joining their 'gangs'? Bad news when all this control upon control leads into a dictatorship of any kind …!?

My school years were drawing to a close. I had a Saturday job at a grocery store in Carlisle for a year from the middle of 1958 and got a ten shilling note (50p) for a whole day's work. I was smoking heavily and my approximate three-year stage of 'transitional rebellion' in growing up was getting underway (at least I had the freedom to think it through for myself, but could have done with wise advice and guidance over major decisions) - some bad language but definitely not blasphemy and, join the rebellion club, with a good measure of stupidity. My mother was

managing financially in that big house - not sure how - but the property was not being looked after as it needed to be. Strange really, for all the outward signs of status and wealth, one problem was that I had to wear my brother's 'hand me downs' in clothes, including shoes which didn't fit, which caused lasting problems to my feet. I would still willingly do anything to help my mother with chores and give any help with my two younger sisters. By 1958 my mother and I would share cigarettes, whisky and gin. After the divorce, she got the Vauxhall Velox, the better of the two cars, but 'flogged' it for cash - though I think she was 'taken for a ride'. I don't remember her going out much in those days until 1959, so one important thing at that time was that my mother was available when needed; for example, when I came home from school or whatever. This was beneficial to me and had a stabilising effect.

I was observing then and more recently how life can treat people. You look around at some of your school classmates and other friends and wonder at their potential - of course, nearly all of them in my case were from fairly wealthy backgrounds. Did you ever see that film called 'The Knowledge', where there was a group of people who would be London taxi drivers but on average only three out of the class would make it? It was a comedy and the one who was made to look a bit dithery if not incompetent was always falling off his bicycle as he went around learning all the street names. The ones you would never have thought would make it did so and the man with his bicycle was one of these; yet the ones you might have thought would do so, didn't! Whatever the reasons, life is like that. In the early days of being at Grosvenor College School, I used to mix with a certain lad who was even thinner than I was. That was okay. The years went by and after Holt School, when back at Grosvenor College, one day during a lesson I looked out of the front downstairs bay window of that large suburban house, which over-looked the car-park and grounds, when a Jaguar pulled up. Very slowly being helped out of this car was this same lad: very small in stature and thin, as he had not grown since I remembered him those few years earlier. He was just managing to walk with the help of two walking sticks made to suit his height. He must only have been there for a visit. My heart was deeply saddened - I never

saw him again … you see, he didn't make it. Then there was another lad in my older brother's age group. Life was a laugh - he was easy-going and smiled a lot. Once or twice he visited our home and we would all have fun and fool around. He loved chips; in fact, I don't think he ate anything else! He left school at fifteen and within about a year he got leukaemia and quite soon … was gone … he didn't make it. Yet another lad, two or three years older than I was, who had been one of my friends when young and living in St George's Crescent, Carlisle, had me wondering if he too had problems at home and school, due to over-strictness and possibly violence. In the mid-'fifties he called me 'a weed'. Hmmmmmm - not good … well, that's the way it goes! No doubt he was very strong and extremely intelligent, for he later went to Fettes Public School in Scotland and I would say received one of the best educations that it was possible to receive anywhere. By the end of the 'fifties he would barely, if at all, acknowledge me. Strange though, what happened, despite all his gifting. I think to myself, 'I'm still here in my sixties against all the odds' … but I heard on the grapevine years ago that that lad didn't make it either. He was an adult, somewhere in Canada … they weren't sure of the circumstances … so often those you would never have thought would do so, do extremely well! … others don't make it! So many do make it, of course, but are emotionally and/or mentally scarred through some kind of abuse and a lack of loving-kindness, so often with an emphasis upon conditional love, and a work ethic linked with acceptance, based only on performance … but rejection contained within all broken and dysfunctional relationships is one of the most grievous pains to bear. The deep emotional pain we bear, if not sorted out in a right way, will 'kick in' and begin to close our bodies down sooner or later. I am certain that, rightly or wrongly, many have their own 'escape mechanism' into this or that which is, of course, their way of coping or compensating if possible. The middle word in life is 'change' and it is so often unpredictable, but this is reality … and therefore it's reality we have to face.

By 1958 I had made up my mind to work towards some GCE 'O-Levels' but leave school at fifteen to get out of the place - such was my hatred of it! - and to go to the then Carlisle Technical College to

complete them. In those days even to get four could open some quite good doors in the work place or training - this was sort of plan A tied in with another plan in my mind. My ‘escapism’ was the rock’n’roll music of the later ’fifties. I liked the music of that type in all of the ’fifties anyway. My mother liked some of it too and had a few records in the house - the old ‘78s’. I was on holiday in 1956 at Allonby on The Solway Firth with its lovely beach, views to Scotland, a café and horses, when I first heard Presley’s ‘Heartbreak Hotel’ on the juke-box. Sixpence got you one play and a shilling got you three! I was smitten, along with the many. I had ‘6:05 Special’ on BBC television on Saturdays (the only part-time channel you could get in Carlisle in the ’fifties) and had a rented radio by my bedside - mainly for Radio Luxembourg ‘208’. In November 1957, for my thirteenth birthday, I got my own record player. It was a wooden ‘Alba’, with red and white material on it and had its own ‘fragrance’ when it used to get very warm. It had four speeds and would play the new records at 45rpm as well as take 78s and the long- playing records. Best of all, it had two diamond styluses - what a novelty not to have to keep changing the needles any more! My first record was Paul Anka’s ‘I Love You, Baby’. I went on to build up quite a good collection and looked after them even to the extent of keeping the original sleeves, but about thirty years later I got rid of nearly all of them that were left - don’t think the man on the stall at Retford Market Square that day could believe his good fortune! For a time I lived for those records.

Now, I would love to have been able to play a musical instrument but it was not my gifting to do so. To work out a one-finger melody of a favourite tune on the piano was about my lot. If most of us have our various types or forms of music that we enjoy – okay, it fills a need or want at various levels of our being and this was so for me - fine, as long as it was not an end in itself or taking the place of relationships. My escapism into the realm of music at this time of growing up with hormones rushing around in my body addressed the need for, not the physical but the emotional and heart-expression from the depth of my being because of all the rejection, violence and stupidity I had experienced. In other words, I was looking to identify with love,

acceptance and worth, which came to me through the music. For me this was a healthy expression, as it was an intense heart experience. What did I really want from life? My escapism was not actually into unreality as such, perhaps because of my mother's 'matey' or close type of friendship, and I was free to be me, yet because of her problems there was probably some form of emotional dependence on me. I am trying to honour my parents and be respectful to the memory of them, but the reality was, although everything might have looked okay on the outside, with the status, education, material wealth, etc, on the inside was a poverty of normality and the effects of rejection were causing havoc. I had received an almost total rejection from my father - this was something I would have to overcome later. My mother's life was messed up, hence that measure of emotional dependence on me; but, as mentioned above, I was keen to help her.

If I was a bit of a loner and missed out on having mates or mixing with girls to the extent that it would have been more healthy, I was not really bothered at that time. I was thinking about the future work place. As I think now, looking back to then, I agree with what someone said … that there are three categories with the potential to cause problems if one succumbs to greed in any of them - 'Power, Pennies and Petticoats'. Although I did not articulate it then, I had seen enough by 1958/59 to know that money does not buy happiness, joy or peace and that in fact often the opposite is true … it can so often, in its wake, bring devastation. Yes, we need some money to live, but I was certainly not going to run after the stuff. Power? - no thanks. I believe it corrupts sooner or later in selfishness and within the systems of the world, religion, etc - true friends are too precious to play any power games with and so be the loser. No, what I did was to make a heart, inner vow that I would be happily married! I fitted the music of the 'fifties, which I liked, into the framework … so from Ruby Murray's 'Softly Softly' (turn the key and open up my heart) to Tommy Steele's 'Singin the Blues', 'Handful of Songs' or 'Butterfingers', to Tab Hunter's 'Young Love', Pat Boone's music, Elvis Presley, The Platters, Everly Brothers, etc, etc … but I really got hooked on and idolised Holly and The Crickets. By the middle of

1959, I probably had every record of the latter, separately and together, that had at that time been released in the UK. Yes, I can remember my mother waking me up in the morning of February 4th 1959 with the Daily Express front page to tell me of the tragic plane crash and I told those in my class at school that day - one was fanatical over Holly (and another over Presley) - several of us were devastated. But there was something very strange and it took me years to work it out - because Holly had lost his girlfriend when she was fourteen in a road 'streetcar' accident in Lubbock, Texas, he gave out a strangely passionate type of music of love and was vocally gifted to do so, writing the words and playing some of the music; but contained within some of it was a deep sadness and a death-wish. I could identify with the deep emotional sadness as I'm sure many of you may have done. For then I went with the flow, but later in life would 'sort it out'.

Time was marching on and I got side-tracked! Help! By the end of 1958 and into 1959 my mother started to socialise again. My two sisters were going to 'Red Gables' all girls' school in Carlisle - the female equivalent of Grosvenor College, if you like - for the children of those who had too much money - well, maybe. One of the contacts made through the children being friends together was with the managing director of the Silver Grill Restaurant in the middle of Carlisle. He and his family lived in a village a few miles outside of the city, so my mother began to make visits to the Silver Grill and to his home. The establishment had a bread/cake shop and various bars and eating rooms, along with a large restaurant-cum-function room with a dance floor and a balcony. A lot of money had been spent on the place and the kitchens alone had cost many thousands of pounds in the days when you could buy a good house for one or two thousand. Sometimes I would visit and there was a lot of good treatment, like being waited on, and the coffee, alcohol or whatever flowed. Now this, along with the powerful charismatic personality of the overall boss who could hold a group and tell jokes or stories 'till the cows came home', may all sound very enjoyable.… but … but … what was really going on? It seemed good to me … why? … I felt more adult and grown-up … it fed my adolescent rebellion … careful …

was being sucked in … but to what? … 'Oh, the games people play now … what people say now …'!

I thought that my middle brother might have had leanings towards something academic but, much to my surprise, he went out to work, probably in the early part of 1959, to the Silver Grill Restaurant as a 'trainee hotel manager'. It all sounded very grand, as he was to spend so many months in each department, then go to work overseas in hotels and have time off to go to catering classes at the local technical college. Mother encouraged or allowed him to do so. So, as 1959 went on, I thought this might be a good idea for me too; but how can you know at fourteen years old what would be suitable as a career to embark on if you have any choice in the matter? If you have been damaged in your childhood, it needs much careful consideration in order for you to become a responsible member of society. I was drawn in in immaturity for the wrong reasons, by a ruthless business man. My mother gave me the green light … or was it a more positive encouragement? What of getting some GCE 'O-Levels'? I was told, by the managing director, at my interview that they were not that important … what disgraceful advice! … as each department, including the office side of things, would be covered and therefore, as a whole, the training would be complete in itself, for that future hotel/catering management position. But it would not have taken a brain surgeon to assess my suitability for particular types of jobs. Listen, I kept accounts of my pocket money at home and my father would use me to do admin work in his surgery now and again, which I really enjoyed … so obviously I liked office work. Physically, I was not built for hard physical labour. I did wonder later on why no-one had had a friendly chat with me to talk me through what I was doing and the possibilities/options for the future so as to point me in the right direction for such a major life decision - a bit of sensible forward-planning. After all, like many other parents, I attempted to do this for my children years later. If my father or maternal grandfather had offered to share with me, would I have listened? I don't know, but I would like to think I would have done so. I had a healthy fear of both of them. Certainly, if the necessary financial help and encouragement had been

forthcoming, I would have listened. Just for a parent to pay money for an education at school but not follow it up as to why the child was determined to leave, even though it was supposed to be a privilege, did not make sense, especially if it was not followed through to an acceptable goal. Was this rejection? I left school on my fifteenth birthday, apart from returning one day at the end of term to collect my books, etc, and, having made a decision to start training at the Silver Grill, braced myself to start work on 1st January 1960 ... life was going to be very different!

4
Learning The Hard Way

Jimmy Nic (Nicholson) was the head waiter in the large upstairs restaurant/function room of the Silver Grill and he was a hard man. How could it be otherwise, for he had served in the Middle East a few years earlier in the Second World War as an Army Sergeant? People like him had played their part in giving people like me their freedom from Hitler, the evil dictator, and from The Great War. I was fifteen and a half and had just brought him his 'pint of slush' (beer), as ordered to do so - then he looked at me intently and started to laugh and laugh. "Now, what does this mean?" I wondered! Familiarity was not allowed on my part. He stopped laughing and just said, "You've got it all to come!" Well, he was definitely right, but he didn't know I'd already seen quite a lot. Actually, we got on fairly well together - a mutual respect, if you like. A few years later I heard he had a pub in, I think, Appleby, so I went to visit him one evening when I had a car and got a really good welcome.

But back to the dining room … to get there I had to do six months of kitchen portering - the lowest of the low (in social terms, but absolutely necessary in reality) so as to experience what it was like. What rubbish - it was a con! There could be no possible benefit, except to waste precious time when I could have been studying or learning a trade beneficial to me. The schools I went to had already taught me about the importance of 'serving'. I realised later that when I left school the day I was fifteen I was probably well on the way to getting a pass in two or three 'O-Levels'. Of course, there were the qualities of 'serving' and 'humility' that went with this 'portering', but when backed up with my rebellion of mid-teens, at whatever level that was, in this environment which was not exactly 'decent' due to bad language and worse and for me to have hooked in and

be influenced by all of this was to really ‘stupid yourself’! Cleaning large pans, floors, walls, etc, and dishes for evermore I was, at fifteen, putting in about fifty hours a week and coming out with the princely sum of 19 shillings and 7 pence (almost £1) to begin with. Working overtime made little difference - it was all for ‘the cause’. I was being exploited as slave labour - how the bosses must have laughed and laughed as I foolishly played my part in lining their pockets. ‘Oh … the games people play now …’! I can’t remember details of when it was, but when the authorities came around checking the company finances they were ordered to give me a rise.

I did about a year in the dining room, which included the winter dinner- dance season, so sometimes I would start at 9am and have two or three hours off in the later afternoon, then work through till midnight or 1 or 2am the next morning. On at least one occasion I was putting in around fifty hours for a three-day work period; then I heard that the ‘big boss man’ had called me ‘Creeping Jesus’, though it was a shame he never had the backbone to tell me to my face. I would have given him his answer in no uncertain terms. He should have got rid of me and done me a favour! Bullies are so pathetic - they are always cowards. Other members of staff who had some maturity were trying to tell me I was being conned and I started to take it on board. I was not happy and began to realise I had chosen the wrong type of work for me because I was too slow and methodical and was more interested in quality than quantity (possibly some damage from my upbringing). Another lad started as a ‘trainee manager’ who obviously had good parenting - he was only there a couple of weeks or so and was quickly taken out by his father.

When I went into the kitchen to work as a cook/chef, I realised that having fun trying out recipes at home was vastly different from large busy kitchens within the catering industry; in fact, it spoilt the fun of cooking at home. I think my ‘level’ would have been owning and running a small B & B - it certainly could have been more fun and more my lifestyle. Now it was reported to me that my other brother and I had been called ‘scullions’ by our father - not good! I realise now that such a ‘spoken negative’ would work as a curse, unless dealt with – certainly, if