



**PART ONE:**  
**Preparation time**

## Spiritual Experience

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### LOOKING BACK

When I look back over my life I can now see clearly how certain standout events were pivotal in creating the most appropriate foundation for the future that God could see that I was best suited to. At that time God could see it. I certainly couldn't.

Had I known what was ahead I might have tried to climb back into my mother's womb and call out: "Beam me up Scotty."

But let's keep things in perspective. I have lived a charmed life in comparison to millions of others. The horror stories about the results of being raised in a "dysfunctional" family are legion. On a scale of one to ten mine's barely a two.

It is my humble opinion that almost all families are "dysfunctional" because the negative influences on this planet at this time almost prevent a proper functioning family unit.

I therefore herald my parents as angels in a strange disguise and recommend that others try to view theirs in the same perspective. If you could do so, healing would be much quicker in manifesting.

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## EARLIEST MEMORIES

My parents, God bless them, are both back in the hands of our Heavenly Father. Deep in my soul I know that both of them would approve of me sharing these first few stories because they know that my intent is not to place a finger of blame upon them but merely to show how as parents we sometimes will say and do things that inflict pain. When we are aware of this we can be much more guarded in our choice of utterances.

I was born in the far northeast of Canada in 1941 when war was raging in Europe. My first home was next door to the Baptist Church, in fact it was the church manse which was rented to my grandparents because the pastor was a single man who preferred to live in a room and board situation rather than alone in that big manse. Mom and dad rented the second story from his father.

Across the street was a large school on the top of which was built a very powerful air raid siren. This strategic location was both a profound blessing and a curse for me.

My bed was a crib that was placed by the upstairs window that overlooked the church. When weather permitted mom would leave the window open a bit and I can recall the feeling of those glorious voices pouring forth from that Negro gospel church. To this very day Southern Gospel music thrills me.

But I also remember the nights in the darkness when that wartime air raid siren would go off on top of the school. It terrorized me. Mom would come racing into the bedroom as part of her routine of pulling down the blinds in every room of the house and turning out the lights, supposedly to stop enemy aircraft from spotting the presence of lights in the community.

20 years later I was driving down a highway when a police cruiser pulled up behind me and turned on its siren. It so unraveled me that I felt I was all over the road before I finally got that vehicle to a halt. Those sirens do not bother me today, however, the impact that they had on me as a child lasted for at least half of my life.

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## THE MISSUNDERSTANDING

I was about two years of age when my first younger brother was taken home from the hospital and placed into the crib in which I used to sleep. I recall holding onto the bars of the crib and staring in at my baby brother. I could feel my heart welling up with so much love for him that I turned and found a teddy bear that had been very precious to me. Standing on my tippy toes I reached up and let the teddy bear fall over the top railing of the crib and drop in for him to enjoy. It was my hearts way of expressing my love.

When mom came into the room and spotted the teddy bear in the crib she reached in and grabbed my gift and threw it away, then she turned to me and with the strongest of anger in her voice she told me to never put anything in that crib again. I tried to tell her that I was only expressing my love to my baby brother by giving him my gift, but she would not listen to me and continued to impress upon me that I must never again put anything into that crib.

I did not understand it at the time of course, but I was shocked and very angry at my mother because she would not listen to me, she refused to acknowledge that it was a demonstration of my love. She saw only a dirty old teddy bear and of course was concerned for the health of her newborn.

I also did not realize the extent of my anger at my mother for not listening to me, for not believing me. That was to prove to be the motivation for me to run away. For many years thereafter every time someone would not listen to me anger bubbled up inside and I had to fight off a knee jerk reaction.

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### **DAD'S OUTBURST**

For many years I never understood why my father always seemed to be almost constantly critical of me. No explanation was ever offered until one day, in the fullness of his anger, he accused me of almost killing my mother during childbirth. I know that to dad my mother was the jewel of jewels, the greatest joy in his life. But he had no inkling of the impact of his outburst and the ongoing attitude of anger towards me. All the more reason to run away.

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### THE RUNAWAY BOY

Needless to say this little boy was not a happy camper. I wanted to run away. I suppose in my soul I was truly “looking for love in all the wrong places”.

My mother's best friend was Marg who worked at the gas station about a half a mile from my home. She was a bubbly, loving lady and I liked Marg very much.

One day my mother looked out in the backyard and I was gone. She searched the neighborhood and couldn't find me. It wasn't until the telephone rang that mom learned...I had walked all the way to the gas station to see Marg. In the process I had walked down the sidewalk of one of the busiest streets in town and crossed a rather dangerous intersection for a little boy just three years of age.

Marg agreed to keep feeding me ice cream until mom could get there and drag me home. I have always been a sucker for ice cream.

It wasn't long after that when the runaway decided to have another go at it. Unfortunately, or fortunately as the case may be, my mother spotted me at a dead run just as I was approaching the same busy street only this time I turned a corner and headed the opposite direction to the downtown core.

Mom dropped her apron and out the door like a shot. My grandparents lived downstairs so there was no problem in keeping an eye on my baby brother. Running as hard as she could mom was slowly closing the distance between us when she realized that she dare not call out my name, otherwise I might have turned to look back, tripped and fallen, because I was running as hard as my little legs could take me at the time.

I made it across a very busy intersection and was on the very edge of the downtown core when finally, my mother's long arm got a hold of me. I was dragged back home again, but this time I was not prepared for what happened. I was strapped into a harness and a rope was tied to the back of it with the other end tied to the clothes line. “That's it, you won't run away anymore.” Now I *really* wasn't a happy camper.

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In the years that followed, and after the birth of my second little brother, the two boys always believed that I was the bad one. They were never capable of seeing the real reason why my father was constantly criticizing me and his constant criticism was creating a heap of anger inside of me.

It was many years later when I came to learn the reason why my hands had been covered in warts when I was a child in grade school. It was because of my anger toward my parents. Louise Hay, God bless her, was the one who finally gave me that insight in one of her books.

Today I do not view these experiences in a negative light, not at all, for it was because of them that I became an independent thinker. I know I always looked forward to the day when I could have my freedom and live on my own. I became a seeker and at last began looking for love in the right place.

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### A GROWING BOY

A little clay pot in a humble garden. Certainly nothing to brag about, but the soil was good and well prepared for the growth that lay ahead.

Being born the son of a truck driver is enough to keep anyone humble. But the soil of this family was far more appropriate for me than I ever could have imagined. I didn't know that I was to become a songwriter...I didn't have a clue about that at the time.

But time gives us 20/20 vision when we look back. Now I can reflect on my past and see how our home was constantly full of music. Dad played the fiddle, mouth organ and the radio constantly. The latter was perpetually delivering an earthy combination of country, bluegrass, gospel and old-time music.

Mom on the other hand had a quieter passion. She was into poetry big-time. During her younger years she had created a scrapbook and every week she gleaned a small piece of poetry from the local newspaper and added it to the book. I would spend hours soaking up the rhyme and meter of words that were carefully selected and positioned. My parents were the perfect combination with the perfect home in which to raise a songwriter.

Now add to this potting soil the warmth of good clean humor. Red Skelton was my lifeline through the dark years of my youth. I remember looking forward to Red's weekly program which always reduced me to fits of laughter and tears, to the point that at times I was rolling on the floor holding onto my sides. Ah what medicine for the soul! May God bless that man who always ended his program with a blessing for us when he would say: "Good night. God bless." Red Skelton genuinely loved people and was not afraid to show it. That in itself was another tremendous lesson for me.

But all was not rosy on the home front, there were tensions and undercurrents that also served to shape a growing boy. Part of the problem no doubt stemmed from a habit of mine.

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It seems that as a child my curiosity almost drove my father to distraction. I was always taking things apart to find out how they worked. At 7 years of age I was dangerous with a screwdriver in my hand.

Dad really chewed me out the day he came home from work and discovered I had dismantled the toaster. I later grew to learn that the reason it got him so upset was *not* because I was taking things apart ... it was because he couldn't figure out how to put them back together.

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### **THE MOST MEMORABLE TRIP OF MY LIFE**

I was in grade 1 when Mom, Dad, my 5-year-old brother Lewis and I set out on an adventure. We were on one of those long, long drives where we kids kept asking the proverbial question: “Are we there yet?”

We were almost to our destination when Dad, in his wisdom, decided it was time for a gas and restroom break. Five minutes later the car was full of gas and we kids both had empty bladders. We all climbed into our old Plymouth and off we went again. This old Plymouth was unique. It was one of the last built with “suicide doors”. For those of you who are not old enough to know what “suicide doors” are ... the back doors opened backwards.

As it turned out Dad had just gotten the car up to highway speed when we approached the first in a series of overhead steel girder bridges. Noting that he had failed to close his door completely at the service station Dad simply opened his door and then slammed it shut.

“Monkey see, monkey do.” I looked at my door and by Jove it was not closed all the way either. Without a thought I opened the door ... the wind caught it ... my little hands then clamped as hard as I could to the door handle ... and bingo I was catapulted out of the car, across the road between two oncoming cars and down over the bank on the other side of the road.

Dad slammed on the brakes, skidded across the bridge and stopped ... convinced that his son was dead.

Unconscious, I was taken to a doctor’s office in nearby North Sydney. The first thing I recall was waking up to see this man bent over me with a shiny reflector disk on the middle of his forehead. The sight scared me so bad I passed out again. Coming to later, I found myself sporting a bandage over one eye and a headache. Not a single broken bone.

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Apparently I had landed on the grass on the opposite side of the road and then rolled down the bank. Apart from a scratch on an eyebrow I was OK. It was about 12 years later before it was discovered that I had also received a superficial scratch on the surface of my right eye. The scratch formed a scar which, when I was in grade 12, resulted in me having to wear glasses to see the print in my German textbook. It also meant I would never be able to fly an aircraft, my greatest dream.

“Why did I not die then and there?” A second or two in either direction and I would have gone head first into an oncoming vehicle or one of the steel girders of that bridge. “Why did I not die then and there?” I came to believe at an early age that God must have something in mind for me to do because it *had* to be His guardian angels that saved me that day.

That was not the only time in my life when I could have been killed but lived to tell about it. Those experiences further raised that same question in my mind. My conclusion has not changed. Only now I *know* He had something in mind for me to do ... and this is it. Share my experiences with you so you can learn without having to suffer the same consequences I did. But I am getting ahead of myself so back on track.

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### **GOD SEES THE LITTLE SPARROW FALL**

As a little boy, attending church was something that I greeted with mixed emotions. I loved that huge pipe organ in the First Presbyterian Church in my home town but I hated the memorization that I had to endure in Sunday School.

So apart from my love of the music I would not want to go. I never felt it was doing me any good. No good that is until the day that my conscience caught up to me.

Like most young boys I think we all had a thing for slingshots. They were neat ways to send an object flying at high speed.

It was in one of those early years when I chanced to discover a really special trick. If I took a paper clip and cut it in two with a set of wire cutters the resulting two “U” shaped metal pieces made for fabulous projectiles.

Visiting a young friend’s home, I spotted a sparrow in the bushes. I pulled out my sling shot and loaded it. I took a careful aim and let it go ...straight to the target. The little bird toppled off the branch and onto the ground.

Half startled and half triumphant at my success I bolted and ran to collect my prize. Then just as I cupped the little feathered creature in my hands I very clearly heard the Sunday hymn. “God sees the little sparrow fall, it meets His tender view...”

With tears streaming down my face and my heart filled with regret and sympathy and love for the little bird I prayed fervently to God to heal him.

In an instant the little creature stirred and realizing his location in my hands he flew as fast as he could away from me.

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I was cured. I do not recall ever shooting that slingshot again. God got me good that day. In later years I learned that that was also a lesson in the healing power of love.

### THE ANGEL ON MY WAY TO SCHOOL

They tell me that all little boys do not hate school. Well I cannot speak for anyone else but I for one hated the joint.

Perhaps it was because of the embarrassment I suffered in grade 1 when the teacher made me go sit in the corner with a dunce cap on my head.

I recall turning my back to the class and in the process I discovered a rack of beads that were used by the teacher to teach us how to count. Of course I just *had* to play with those tempting beads and that did it. When the teacher spotted me enjoying myself while standing in the corner she came down on me like a ton of bricks...or at least that is what it felt like to a 1<sup>st</sup> grader.

Anyway I decided right then and there I did not like school and I wanted no more of it. Only the threat of the “truant officer” kept me going.

It was on one of those mild winter days when I found myself on the way to hell, so to speak, and I was in absolutely no hurry to get there. I discovered that the melting snow was making a tempting little river down the side of the road in the ditch.

I was wearing my new rubber boots, Christmas 1947 edition. They were almost knee height and I thought I would give them a real test run so into the ditch I waded slogging along at a snail’s pace.

And then it happened. I stepped forward into a low spot in the ditch and the ice cold water poured over the top quickly filling my lovely high boots to the brim. I scrambled out of the ditch and tried to extract the heavy water filled boots from my feet. Alas, I couldn’t get them off. I was in trouble and I was still a distance from the school and in addition I was now feeling very cold.

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Then it was I heard a gentle female voice calling out to me. The lady in the house across the street had been watching me and saw my predicament. I did not hesitate I was off to her door as fast as I could slosh along.

Once inside she lovingly pulled the boots off and poured the water outside. She then pulled my socks off and taking a towel she lovingly dried my feet then had me sit by the oven door of her kitchen wood stove.

With the door of the stove open and a warm fire burning in the old fashioned stove I rested with my feet up on the door and fresh, long, warm socks were skillfully pulled onto my feet. I felt like I was in heaven with my ice cold feet warming up to a toasty feeling again.

I believe she phoned the school to report that I was OK at her place and that the school then phoned home to tell my Mom that all was well.

Today I have passed my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and still, every time I return to my home town and drive past that house, I can feel that woman's love and over-care for me. I also have become very aware that that was one more case where my Guardian Angels were working overtime to take care of me. How about you? Have you ever experienced anything like that?

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### ANGEL IN THE SNOW

I shall never forget the cold winter night that turned out to be a magical, blessed evening.

It was probably about 9PM. A clear star studded sky was the roof of my world as I waded through the fresh, deep, powdered snow and up the side of Fraser's Mountain behind my parent's home. Alone in the world with my thoughts I marveled at the way the snow sparkled.

When I got about half way up the side of the hill, at a place where the slope was steep, I turned my back to the mountain and fell backwards into the cushion of powder. Arms out stretched I found myself overcome with the childhood desire to make an angel in the snow by moving my arms up and down.

Awestruck by the grandeur of the universe above me, I reflected on how my life had been spared from the car accident when I was only seven years of age. That night I could not get away from the feeling that somehow I had promised God that I would do something for Him. I just could not think of what that might possibly be. I was now about sixteen years of age and the time of my life's career decision was drawing nigh.

I lay there for the longest time in my warm winter clothing. I never heard a word. I had no vision. But that night I sincerely felt that somehow I renewed my commitment to serve God in whatever way He had in mind. Time and time alone would show me when and how. I only knew I would do it. I had to. I had promised and when I make a promise to God I am going to keep it.

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## ARITHMETIC

How are you at spelling? If you are like me, you occasionally find a challenge with the spelling of certain words.

I learned many, many years ago about a little trick that may work for you.

Mom was in the lower levels of elementary school when she realized she had a problem. For love or money, she could not spell the word “arithmetic” correctly.

Then an inspiration surfaced. She decided to create a rhyme to spell it. So arithmetic became:

“Annie Ryan is there hooking matches every time I come.”

Try it. You’ll love it. That is the one word I never had a problem with.

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### **DAD WHISTLING IN THE RAIN (CHOOSING YOUR ATTITUDE)**

It was a miserable dark, cold, rainy evening. A truck driver was heading back to his freight yard to park his vehicle at day's end. It had been a long, wet, hard working day delivering freight down an old rural highway to train stations and customers along the way. The driver was ready for a hot shower and rest when it happened. "BANG!" A tire on his big truck blew out.

As providence would have it the truck came to a stop in front of a grocery store. In the doorway stood two men ... their attention caught by the sound and the sight before them. While the two men watched from the shelter of the doorway the driver got out into the cold rain and started the process of changing the tire.

Mind you this was back in the 50's when every truck driver was fully expected to change the tire himself right then and there and then continue on his way.

But something happened that really caught the "observers" eyes and ears. Both were expecting to hear the sky turn blue with words that would make an angel blush. But that was not to be the case. The driver started to whistle. There in the cold rain, where few men would have blamed him; there were no sounds of a complaint. Only a man with a job to do and whistling happily to himself in order to pass the time while he laboriously changed the big, heavy tire.

The next week the driver chanced to have a delivery to that very store. "Art, do you recall last week when you had a flat tire in front of the store that there were two of us standing in the doorway watching you?" Dad had hardly noticed.

"Well" said the merchant. "You are now famous. The man standing beside me was the local minister and he was so impressed by your actions that you became the inspiration for his sermon on Sunday."

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Dad told us about the event and its strange outcome. But that was not to be the end of the story.

About 40 years later my Dad was in the late stages of cancer. His days were numbered and he knew that because the cancer was inoperable. The Victorian Order of Nurses, the VON, sent a nurse on a regular basis to check on him to do what they could to make him as comfortable as possible.

Dad loved to talk so I guess it was inevitable that when a new nurse came to visit one day, Dad engaged her in conversation.

She chanced to mention that she used to live in Merigomish. That perked Dad right up. “Merigomish! I used to drive the freight truck down through there for years.”

The nurse paused for a moment then chanced to ask. “Did you ever have a flat tire on your truck right out in front of the general store on a rainy night?”

Surprised at her question, Dad quickly responded, “Yes, as a matter of fact I did. How do you know about it?”

“Do you recall the two men who stood in the doorway and watched you that night?” She quizzed?

“Yes I do.” He replied.

“I am that minister’s wife” she countered. “...and I remember very clearly the sermon in church the following Sunday ... about that incredible driver who chose to have a very positive reaction to a very dirty job.”

Dad was almost reduced to tears and he got a big hug before the lady left.

How will you handle the next dirty job you are called upon to do? That day I learned that the reward for it may be years in the coming but it will come.

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## THE END OF RELIGION

I have always been curious about religion and grateful for the fact that I felt like I came from a Heinz 57 religious background. Ironically my first home was a manse...rented out to my grandfather by the Second Baptist Church. It was the negro church's manse and was rented out because the new minister was a bachelor and he preferred to take room and board in the community as opposed to living alone in the big two story manse. Mom and dad rented the upstairs from his parents and wouldn't you know it, but my bedroom window opened toward the church which blessed me every Sunday with the most beautiful voices on Earth.

I recall being told that, when weather permitted, mom would set me outside in the carriage on Sunday mornings and as the parade of beautiful chocolate colored ladies made their way past me, I was picked up and hugged by one lady after another. How could I ever possibly develop prejudice because of the color of one's skin. These ladies had the biggest hearts for this little white baby boy and I loved them.

When I got old enough to ask a few questions about religion and our family background I was taken by the fact that my four grandparents and my parents had a combined background experience in approximately six denominations. I could never figure out how anyone could possibly think that the denomination that they were born into was the only one that had all the right answers? That seemed preposterous to me.

Sunday mornings, however, saw me carried off to the First Presbyterian Church for a good dose of Scottish theology. I hated Sunday school as I detested memorization, but I loved that humongous pipe organ. To this day the opening strains of "Holy, holy, holy. Lord God Almighty" reverberate through my soul.

I did all the things that a good little Presbyterian boy was called upon to do. I went through Cubs, Scouts, junior choir, young people's group and finally senior choir ... senior choir that is, until my voice changed.

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And then it happened. Our beloved minister left and a new minister was brought in. Shortly thereafter a message was delivered to our home. It was short and to the point. The new minister would not be visiting us.

Now you have to realize that the First Presbyterian Church was the Sunday home of most of the doctors, lawyers and businessmen in the community. My dad was a truck driver. There was an explosion in our home. Mom, dad and I declared that we would never set foot in the church again... and didn't.

I was determined that they would only get me to marry me and bury me, otherwise, I would never again have anything to do with organized religion. And on that foundation I went forward in my life.

From the age of 17 until I had passed my 40th birthday I avoided all contact with anything of a religious nature but my curiosity about how things worked continued unabated.

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## MY MOTHER'S SECRET

What triggers one's curiosity? Back in the middle sixties I found my attention lassoed by two authors in particular.

The first was the humble Christian Edgar Cayce, the best-documented psychic in North America. He discovered that he was blessed with astounding psychic gifts and they led him to a life dedicated to helping others. Cayce's "readings," given in a trancelike state, ranged from phenomenal medical cures to advice on spiritual growth, psychology, and prophecy of world events. My curiosity about the unknown was definitely sparked by reading about him and his experiences.

The second was Ruth Montgomery, a widely read, well-respected journalist, political columnist and author in Washington, DC. She was also a self proclaimed Christian psychic in the tradition of Jeane Dixon and Edgar Cayce. I was fascinated by her books *Here and Hereafter* and *A Gift of Prophecy*.

With my head swimming as a result of what I had been studying I wanted to be able to talk to someone about what I had discovered. There was absolutely no thought of attempting to discuss matters of this kind with my father or my two younger brothers...but my mother...that was a different story.

When dad and my brothers were away mom and I would sit and talk about anything under the sun. It was on one of those evenings when I seized the opportunity to open up and share with mom all that was swimming around in my head. I shared with her my newfound knowledge from Edgar Cayce and Ruth Montgomery, especially the references to out of body experiences.

After a few minutes of sharing I noticed that mom got very quiet and thoughtful. Then, cautiously at first, she opened up and shared a secret.

First you need to know that my mother's mother had passed away when mom was about six years of age. Her father was a cook on board ship and therefore was not

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in a position to raise six little girls all by his self. Therefore, the Children's Aid Society stepped in, seized the girls, and farmed them out to different homes.

So it was that when mom was about 13 years of age and living in the foster home she became deathly ill. The family doctor was summoned, and, as was the custom at that time, he came to the house to check on mom. As the story was relayed to me, the doctor had the stethoscope on mom when her heart stopped beating.

Mom said she woke up in the most beautiful place she had ever seen. The colors were bright and beautiful, the greens were greener, the reds were redder, and so on. In front of her was a green grassy knoll and on the other side of the knoll facing her stood her mother. Her mother said to her: "Jessie, it's not your time yet dear."

Mom said that instantly she knew exactly what her mother meant and silently said "Okay". Instantly she found herself back in her body and her heart commenced to beating again.

Thank God the doctor said nothing to the foster parents about what had happened. Mom lived in fear of her foster mother and sensed that if she ever told "the old lady" about what happened that she would have been backhanded across the face and told: "Don't talk so foolish." So her secret was locked up inside of her. Even when she met and married my father, mom never felt safe enough to share this experience with him.

It was only now, when she was in her middle 50s, that she finally felt safe enough to open up and share her secret with me. I shall be eternally grateful for her trust and confidence in me. Somehow, she knew I would understand and I did.

From that day of her out-of-body experience mom had absolutely no fear of dying, and perhaps one of the greatest gifts that she ever gave me was the very same confidence in knowing that when the time comes to leave this planet...life continues. Thank you God for this revelation...and the adjoining peace.

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### A MOTHER AND SON ADVENTURE

I was working in a small east coast shipyard when one day I overheard someone speak about a lady who did “readings.” She was the wife of one of the shipyard workers. I discreetly inquired about her name and acquired their telephone number then I approached my mother with an idea.

Mom had told me how before she was married she and her girlfriend went to have their fortunes told by a lady who did tea leaf readings. I recall her saying how impressed she was with the accuracy of the information that was given to her. With these thoughts in mind I presented her with the idea of us making an appointment for a reading.

Mom was delighted at the prospect and so it was that the two of us took a rare occasion to disappear for a few hours one evening and met with the lady. Mom went in first and I waited in the next room while she secured her reading. Then it was my turn.

This very unpretentious, down to earth lady sat facing me across a small kitchen table. She was very quiet and then made some small suggestion. Suddenly I noticed a change in the expression on her face and her voice took on a lower tone. This almost masculine voice then jolted me with these words. “Why are you lacking in self-confidence? You have the talents of ten men.”

I was floored by the utterance because I felt that it was my greatest secret... that I was lacking in self-confidence. How could she have known that? That evening opened me in a big way to curiosity about the unknown.