

A Short Memoir of An Imprisoned Artist

By Curtis Anthony Dye

My story begins with three sentences taken from an art concept... The artwork I had written the concept for was titled, "Pending Doom."

What a totally awful place to wake up to each morning. My prison cell is cold, unfriendly, and reeks with misery from both the past and the present. Paint peels from walls that are dingy and stained with only God knows what. Outside my cell the sounds of people talking, laughing, shouting, plus televisions blaring are a constant distraction and a reminder of just where I am. "Not that I need any reminding. And then there's the guards . . . They are always walking around while keeping a leery eye on us inmates, us prisoners, us cons, us LowLifes. At times, I wonder just how I've managed to keep my sanity all of these years. Or have I? In all actuality, I could be the biggest nutcase in Calhoun State Prison, but I'm too crazy to even realize it. Now wouldn't that be something to ponder? Remind me to add that to my things-to-worry-about list.

And by the way, I do pray and I'm not a pretender either. Maybe if I had been praying before being locked up, I might not be in prison now.

Nevertheless, I pray and I sometimes believe that God is listening. Maybe he heard me praying all of those times when I didn't think I could do another day behind bars. Or maybe he heard me crying all of the times I received news that another loved one had passed away. Or just maybe, God took pity on a man who has lived half his life in a Georgia Prison. On many occasions, I have wondered if I'll live to get out. We all know tomorrow is promised to no one. Sure I wanna get out. I'm 57 years old and I dream of being out and living a normal life. That doesn't sound too difficult, does it? In 1993 the idea of living a normal life was the furthest thing on my mind. That was the same year a Fulton County Judge sentenced me to a whopping 20 year prison term for armed robbery, kidnapping, and aggravated assault... When I got my time, I honestly thought I'd be back on the streets in 5 to 8 years. Heck, I hadn't hurt anyone, I figured my chances of parole would be pretty good. Yet, several years after being incarcerated a new incoming governor decided it was time to get tough on crime and take back the streets. Not only were people sentenced to longer prison terms, but the ones already in (myself included) had little or no chance of ever making parole. The idea of possibly serving my whole 20 year sentence really got to me. For a time I was mentally drunk and physically sick. I quickly came to realize just how short life really was and how bad decisions had me living a life of heart breaks and regrets. My life had not always been a bad one. I came from a good home. I had a good family. My kin folks and my relatives were all decent people. None that I'm aware of ever went to prison. So why me? Why would anyone commit a crime, any crime, that would land them in prison for decades? I had more than my share of love growing up. My parents were both wonderful people. My father, Curtis Dye, was a hard worker and great all around guy. He was born in 1935 and was brought-up in a large family. He had 11 brothers and sisters. As a boy my father grew up poor, but his family was rich in love for one another. But before I tell you anymore about my father, let me first mention where the Dyes are from. And by the way, my name is Curtis Anthony Dye. My parents always called me Anthony because my father and I had the same first name.

Anyway, ninety miles northeast from Atlanta is where the belle town of Athens Georgia is located. From Athens, if you take Hwy 72 East and then drive 40 miles or so they would eventually end up in

Elbert County and the steadily growing town of Elberton. A block just off of Hwy 72, and to your right once you come into town, sits Elberton's town square. In the middle of the square stands a life size statue of a lone Confederate Soldier (with rifle in hand). As a child, I used to gaze at the statue as my family and I drove past in our 56 Ford Fairlane. To my total amusement, it seemed as if that old soldier was staring back at me. I liked that! To this day that old soldier still guards in Elberton's Town Square. Most of the square's old buildings and stores haven't changed much since I was a boy. Only the people come and go as one generation dies out and another one takes its place.

Now as I was explaining in regard to Hwy 72 . . . If you continued east on through town and drove 10 miles further, then you would come to the small community of Fort Sonia, Ga. Also known as the Flat Woods . . . Fort Sonia is not a big place. There are no traffic lights, so don't blink. The community is blessed with four country stores, a new but small fire station, and an old folks home. In its day, the old folks home used to be Nancy Heart High School, named after the Revolutionary War – this brave woman single-handedly captured three British soldiers who had the misfortune of stopping at her cabin demanding a noontime meal. Because Nancy Heart was severely cross-eyed the three soldiers took her for being harmless. And so, before seating themselves at the kitchen table, they all propped their muskets in a corner by the door. The first chance she got, Nancy Heart grabbed a muskett and held all three soldiers captive until her husband and others came in from the fields.

My mother and father both attended Nancy Heart High and they were high school sweethearts. Where as my mother lived several miles from the high school in one direction, heading back toward town, my father grew up several miles from the high school headed in the other direction. Both lived just off of Hwy 72.

Like I've already stated, my father Curtis came from a poor family. They lived in an old two story house with many large rooms with high ceilings, a long staircase and a large front porch with big oak trees out front for shading. The driveway backing up to the house in gravel was surprisingly long. To each side of the old house are fields, woods, and a barn or two. Behind the house and back in the woods a piece is a slave grave yard. Football size granite rocks at the head of each grave are the only reminders that people were buried there. I believe there are around 20 graves in all.

On a small knot of ground in front of the house, you can see it from the front porch, is where Doctor Henry H. Bower and his wife and children are buried. They died before the Civil War, so their graves are old. There is also a history around the house and in the Elbert County Area. My grandfather Charlie Dye, bought the house and a couple hundred acres of land back in the 30's. Times were hard but he managed to hold onto the place.

When my father was growing up there were not many jobs throughout Elbert County. Times were still hard. My father was born in 1935. as a boy, he once got an orange for Christmas, and he was proud of it. Later, my Daddy (I've always called him Daddy) picked cotton for a little extra money. Daddy and his brothers would hunt, fish, trap or work their garden. Anything to help put food on the family table.

The Dyes always had these huge family get-togethers at their house. Everybody referred to that old house and land around it as The Home Place. As a small boy, I remember how the summers were so hot... All the women folk would sit on the front porch fanning themselves and talking about needing relief from the unbearable heat. While all the women talked, the men would play horse-shoes. They had a place set up underneath some oak trees. Some of the guys would be more interested in calling in a Bob White from the surrounding tree line. My Uncle George was the best at this and I watched how he did it on many occasions. First he would whistle just like a Bob White. He would whistle again and

wait. Sure enough, it wouldn't take long before a Bob White answered Uncle George's call. A short time later the Bob White that he had whistled for would fly close enough to the house to be spotted and pointed to by us all. Later, everyone would go inside and eat a bite. Desert would almost certainly be home made ice cream. About the front porch, it wasn't always crowded with just family emmebrs. Every now and then one or both of Pap Charlie's old bird dogs (Spot or Lady) would slip up on the porch and lay down beside somebody's rocking chair as they rocked. I was always amazed that those two gods never had their tails mashed more often than they did. They came close a lot. For me it was like watching a dog show where somebody would rock backward in their rocking chair; the dog's tail would go underneath the rocker; the person in the rocking chair would then rosk forward; and just in the nick of time, the dog's tail would move outta the way. And so it went, back and forth, back and forth. Dog's tail in the way. Dog's tail out of the way. . . . Perfect timing. . . .

Papa Charlie and my father looked so much alike that it was uncanny. Both men stood about 5'10", weighed about 170, had the same hair line and the same facial features. Papa Charlie was kind but serious. He didn't talk much but when he did people listened. He rolled his own cigarettes and took an occasional sip of tardy. Once when I was about 5 or 6 years old, Papa Charlie and I were sitting on the front porch. A little while later Papa Charlie's favorite bird-dog, Spot, came up on the porch and laid down next to us. Then, unexpectedly, Sport began licking his really large testicles. Me being the curious little boy that I was asked Papa Charlie, "What's those things between Sport's legs?"

papa Charlie looked at what I was pointing to. He appeared suddenly uncomfortable. After glancing around and seeing that nobody was listening, he quickly answered by question. "That's a growth," he grunted. And that was the end of that. Papa Charlie lit a cigarette and then turned in his chair as if he was looking at something far away, or nothing in particular.

My Grandmother, Mama Dye, was one of the kindest people I have ever known in my life. She never had an unkind word for any one. Mama Dye (Sula) was a heavy set woman who got around well and stayed busy around the house. She may have looked plain, but if you ever spoke with her it would quickly become apparent that she was a treasure. She was country as grits, but always had an answer for problems and she had a great memory. She didn't go out much. Mama liked staying at home and talking with company. She also enjoyed her afternoon "Soaps." At night, she always read her Bible. I never heard her complain either. Although it was years before the Dyes got indoor plumbing, Mama Dye never uttered a word of discontent. As a child, she would watch me while Daddy and Mother worked. I remember taking daily baths in a wash tub out back of the house. I always got rinsed with a garden hose. Cold well-water coming of that hose, even in the hot summer, would nearly take my breath away. But Mama Dye always seen to it that I stayed clean. She also had this old Singer Sewing Machine that she powered by punping her foot. I always enjoyed wathcing her mend torn clothes when I was a kid. Watching her use that old Singer was a treat and thrilling. Although Mama Dye passed away in the 80's, she nevertheless left me with some induring memories.

Once when I was say 12 or 13, I asked her all kinds of questions about her childhood. I had a knack for asking questions back then. Mama told me once that she was 11 years old before her family got a horse drawn buggy. Up until then her family had went places in a plain wagon. She explained that "riding in a buggy made them all feel like big shots." and then she would just laugh. Mama Dye also told me about the time she saw her first automobile. She was a young girl the day their country doctor drove by their house and honked. She said everyone at home that day ran to the front door to see the car as it passed. It was thrilling.

Mama remembereed her grandfather. His name was Clint Atkinson. He was from Cow Pen, South

Carolina. When he was 16, Clint was big for his age. The war between the states had started, and he wanted to join the Southern Army. He went with his friends to enlist. He told the people at the enlistment station that he was 18 and he was accepted. Clint told Mama Dye (who was then a young girl) that he was very excited. This was his chance to get a new rifle, wear a uniform, and actually see what life was like beyond Cow Pen. But as it turned out, war was no picnic. Many times he was hungry, cold, and/or wet. When he did see action, some of his best friends died beside him. He told Mama Dye that he felt lucky to come home alive and in one piece

Although my father had 11 brothers and sisters, I think one of my favorite Uncles was Uncle Ted. His son Timbo and I were the same age. We were both born in 1955 and we grew up together, and were interested in a lot of the same things. Uncle Ted was one of my father's brothers who only lived a stone's throw from Papa Charlie's mailbox. I always looked forward to my stays with Mama Dye and Papa Charlie when school was out. Not only did I enjoy the company of my grandparents, but I also enjoyed seeing "Bo" each day. Bo is short for Timbo. Timothy Wayne Dye is Timbo's real name. In the Dye family all the fellas had a nick name. My was Ank.

My aunt Maxine was one of my father's sisters. She was a heavy set woman who had married and moved to Atlanta. I mostly saw my Aunt Maxine during family get-togethers or when she would come to visit Mama Dye and Papa Charlie while I was staying there during my summer vacation. I'll never forget Aunt Maxine. She was the only one I knew of who always dressed like she was going to dine at some fancy restaurant. Maxine always wore a dress and always carried this really big pocket book with snaps. She always wore big pearl size earrings with a big pearl necklace too. And you always knew when Maxine was coming because of her over use of perfumes. I forgot to mention Maxine always wore red lipstick. Maybe I took her the wrong way, but Maxine seemed to be kinda uppity, if you know what I mean. Well anyway, one summer I was staying with my grandparents and Maxine and her husband Donald happened to come up from Atlanta. We were all on the porch and from out of nowhere Aunt Maxine asked if I wanted to ride to the store with her. I was just a kid of 12. The store, which was at Fort Sonia, was at least five miles away. I couldn't walk there. So when Aunt Maxine asked me to ride to the store with her, I gladly accepted. Besides, I had a quarter my mother had given me for spending money. It was so hot and I really wanted a cold drink. Boy was I happy.

Aunt Maxine made a lot of small talk as we drove to Fort Sonia in her air conditioned Chevy Impala. I kept thinking about my cold drink and wondering which of the three country stores Aunt Maxine would stop at. Not that it made any difference. A store was a store. Maxine turned in the gravel lot of Jack Mills Country Store. I had been to his store many times and like any other time, the parking lot was full of pickup trucks, cars, and a farm tractor or two fueling up at the gas pumps. I don't know why but people like hanging out at Jack's Store best. A lot of the old crowd would sit around, playing checkers, talking, drinking sodas and eating candy bars, moon pies, or peanuts. Take your pick . . . Maxine parked but before I could get out she started rambling in her big pocket book. It looked more like a steam trunk. Anyway, she says to me, "I want you to get me something while you're in there, Ank." "Sure," I said eagerly and wearing a big smile on my face. Aunt Maxine snapped her big pocket book closed. She had a five dollar bill in her hand. "What ya want me to get," I asked while still smiling from ear to ear. In her typically loud voice Maxine answered casually, "Get me a box of Kotexes." When she said that, I actually felt myself turn pale. In that brief instant I could see myself standing at the store's check-out counter with Maxine's box of Kotexes. All them nosey country fellas drinking their sodas and eatin their moon pies would be staring at me and asking one another "who's the kid buying Kotex for?" "No!" I said while at the same time crossing my arms. "I'm not going in!"

Maxine had no trouble seeing the embarrassed look on my face. She egged me on a little. "You're not

going in the store?" She was smiling. Sure I wanted to go in. Sure I wanted a cold soda more than anything. But I wasn't going in to buy Kotexes. And I sure wasn't going inside with some fat woman to buy Kotexes. "No!" I repeated . . . Needless to say, Aunt Maxine went inside the store and bought her own stuff. I didn't get out of the car, but I sure missed out on that cold soda. It would have tasted so good!

Now on my mother's side of the family, the Scarbroughs were also hard working people. My mother, Peggy Ann Scarbrough, was a cute little blonde headed girl coming up. I have only seen one picture of my mother as a child. She was 4 or 5 in that photo. She has no others. My mother was born in 1935, the same year as my father. Her family also had a farm and lived in a large two story house. Mother's father, Robert Lee Scarbrough, liked being called Rob. He was a good natured man, a good provider, and he knew how to manage his money. Cows to cotton enabled him to have a decent income, and this gave him the means to buy a piano for his oldest daughter (my mother Peggy), and also paid for her piano lessons. I've never seen a picture of Rob, but I was told that he was tall, slim, and reasonably handsome. His wife Reba was of average height with long dark hair and a big smile that she did not mind sharing with others. Most of all my mother's kin folks and relatives lived within a five mile radius of one another. The Scarbroughs were always more than willing to give one another a helping hand if needed or during times of trouble. Of course, no one could have known at the time, but their commitment to each other's family would soon be put to the test.

During the winter of 1946, I believe the month was November, my dear mother woke up one morning to see fresh snow on the ground outside. She was eleven at the time. So without waking up her two younger brothers or younger sister, mother slipped out of bed then ran down stairs to the living room. There, her mother and father were already up. Her mother Reba was seated in a chair while her father, Rob, stood by the fire place trying to get a fire started on this cold snowy morning. Peggy (my mother) asked her mother if she could go out and play in the snow. Reba told her daughter to first go and get on some warm clothes. At the time my mother was wearing only her nightgown. Excited about the snow, little Peggy quickly left the living room and was just about the town to go up stairs when she heard a loud explosion. The can of diesel fuel Rob had been using to get a fire started blew up in his hands. The house began to burn like a match. Mother tried to go back up stairs but flames blocked her way, preventing her from reaching her brothers and sister. Mother ran out the front door and stood bare foot in the snow. At the tender age of 11, she watched as flames changed her life forever. My mother lost everyone in that fire. Black folks living near by were first on the scene. They quickly found a ladder and attempted to save the children. Later their bodies were all found huddled together in a closet. Somehow Reba still clung to life but barely. She was burned so severely that the next day she was given a mercy shot. Reba was buried wearing a head scarf.

For a time after the fire, mother lived with whichever family members would have her. Mother told me that she lived from pillow to post. Finally, Rob's sister Polly took mother in. Polly was married to a preacher, Reverend Halls A. Nash. The couple did not have any children of their own so my mother fit right in. Uncle Halls owned a general merchandise store just off of Hwy 72, not three miles from where Rob and Reba once lived. Mother stayed with Halls and Polly until she married my father at age 18. that was in 1953. For a time my parents lived with Mama Dye and Papa Charlie in their big house. Most of my father's 11 brothers and sisters were themselves married and had been gone, so there was plenty of room available. Daddy picked cotton for money. Mother worked as a waitress at The Wagon Wheel. Daddy had long since graduated from Nancy Heart. Mother on the other hand had dropped out of school at age 17. I don't know why. On January 18th of '55 I (Curtis Anthony Due) was born in the Elbert County Hospital. In the meantime, Daddy spent a little time serving in the National Guard. But then, in 1957, with few good paying jobs throughout Elbert County, Daddy packed up his small family

and moved to College Park. This is a small town five miles outside of Atlanta. Some of my father's brothers and sisters were already living in Atlanta or around Atlanta. Daddy became a handy man and painter. His work was mostly seasonal, but during the summer jobs were never a problem. Now having a little more money coming in, my parents would pack up the old Ford and go back to Elberton for weekly visits. Family ties were strong back then. Our family grew by one in 1958. January of that year my brother Bret was born at Atlanta's Georgia Baptist Hospital. That next February of '59, my sister Myra was born, also at the Georgia Baptist Hospital. I believe it was in 1964 that my Daddy landed a good paying job at Owen's Illions Glass Planet just outside of Atlanta by the Hearts Field Airport. With a steady income my Daddy bought a brand new 1964 Rambler Station Wagon. The next year, 1965, my mother started working for the Owens Illions Plastic Planet, several miles from where my father worked. My parents were both happy to have their good paying jobs. Looking back, the only thing I didn't like about both parents working were their rotating shifts. For instance, when Daddy worked 3rd shift (night shift), he would leave home at 10:30pm in order to be at work and clock in by 11:00. Mother on the other hand would be getting off work at 11:00 (clocking out) in order to be home by 11:30. This meant my little brother, my little sister and I would be home alone for an hour – by ourselves – before Mother got there. Naturally my brother and sister were always in bed and sound asleep by 10:00. So I would be the one up to watch after them, to guard over them. Most of the time (once my father had left for work) I would be up staring out the living room window with a steak knife in my hand. Looking back, I must have been a sight. Here I was 10 years old, couldn't have weighed 70 pounds soaking wet. And I called myself ready to take on an intruder, or any monsters like Frankenstein or the Wolfman, in order to protect my brother and sister. I was plenty scared but never did I let my parents know. I was supposed to be brave like that old soldier standing guard on Elberton's Town Square. Yet, the minute I saw Mama's car turn down the street we lived on, I would quickly return the steak knife to its place in the kitchen. Then, I would meet Mama at the door with a relieved smile on my face. She always would give me a big boy hug. I liked that.

Something else happened in my early years that I believe would be worth mentioning. In 1959, I began visiting Scottish Wright Crippled Children's Hospital on a regular basis. Unlike my brother, my sister, or any one else in my family that I'm aware of, I was the only one unfortunate enough to be born and later diagnosed with Ricketts. My legs were not only bowed but I was shorter than most kids my age and walked pigeon toed. The doctors at Scottish Wright tried a couple of things during my early visits that they thought would help. First, I was given large amounts of Vitamin D each day. Tablet Form. After a year the results were obvious – nothing had changed for the better. Next, I was made to wear these “dorky” looking leg-braces. These were the exact same kind that young Forest Gump wore in the movie Forest Gump. The braces were *supposed* to act as a guide for my bowed legs. The braces were “supposed” to force my legs to grow straight. Back then, doctors would try things. I used to get x-rayed everytime I visited Scottish Wright. And I'm not talking about some small x-ray machine that was putting out small amounts of radiation. Back then those primitive x-ray machines were the size of a double door refrigerator. Maybe bigger. No telling how much radiation was shot unto my body. No wonder I am unable to get a woman pregnant. Anyway, the braces did not help my condition and for a time I did nothing more than make my visits to the hospital, and let them x-ray my hips and legs, *over and over and over*. Sterilization.

During my early school years, I got picked on a lot. Kids can be mean and name calling came hand in hand with the bullying. Bo-legs was what I heard most. I still to this day remember the mean kids. And I still remember the few who were nice. There were times, I came home from school, went in my room and cried. But I never told a soul. I was supposed to be strong like the old soldier in Elberton Town Square. Hey, I was a kid. I'm not telling this part of my story for pity, nor for sympathy. I'm simply stating the facts. I want others to know that bullying went on even back then, and it does have

an effect on a young person. Nevertheless, I survived those early school years. And as I did so, life was still moving on. The Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show and my parents and I watched them on a black and white television. President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas and again we watched events unfold on that black and white television we watched the Beatles on. The world slowed for no one back then. If anything it was starting to move faster. And here I was, a kid coming up and enjoying my visits to the country. I especially liked staying with Mama Dye and Papa Charlie for a couple of weeks at a time each summer. I also liked getting to see my favorite first cousin, Timbo. We did so much together growing up. We explored old barns and abandoned shacks. We would hunt for arrow heads, fish, and camp out. Where you saw one you always saw the other. We also talked a lot, told each other secrets and discussed what little we knew about life and girls. Sometimes when we would be talking Timbo would (out of the blue) say "I love you Ank." It always embarrassed me when "Bo" said that. Guys weren't supposed to tell other guys stuff like that. But Timbo wasn't saying "I love you" in a gay way. He was simply saying that he cared about me like a brother. Back then I didn't understand but I do now. Thanks, Bo. I love you too.

In 1966 the doctors at Scottish Wright decided it was time to try a new approach for treating my Ricketts. I was already 11 and they wanted to operate on my legs before I get any older. So in the early summer of that year (just as school was letting out) I had one of two major operations. The first required both of my legs to be cut in half between the ankles and the knees. My feet were then turned outwards and my legs were placed in casts to mend. I was confined to a wheel chair after leaving the hospital. When the casts finally came off, I then had to learn how to use crutches in order to return to school. The surgery helped my legs not to appear bowed, but this did nothing to help me gain height. I was still just as short as I ever was. At least I wasn't walking as pigeon toed anymore. I was glad of that.

Just as school was letting out for the summer of 1967 another operation was performed on me. And I thought it couldn't get any worse. This time my hip bones were actually cut away from my body and turned in a way so I gained an inch or two. My hips were reattached with steel plates to steal pins. This time when I woke up after the surgery I was shocked to find I was wearing a cast from my chest to my toes. The doctors had even put this long bar between my ankles that kept my legs spread eagle. My cast looked like a letter "A". I've never in my life went through so much hurt and pain. It was horrible! Once home things were not much better. The body cast made me feel so helpless. I was stuck in bed or on the couch. I couldn't sit up. I couldn't do anything for myself. My Daddy had to carry me from room to room. And to top of the humiliation of it all, I had to use a bed-pan while laying on my back. It was embarrassing. I was a kid having to ask someone to empty my bed pan. No wonder my brothers and sister would get somewhere whenever I was on the throne, or in this case the pan. Heck, I can't blame them. I'd get somewhere too.

Once school started back, I was unable to attend. My teacher dropped off my books and lessons. She would come back by every so often to update me on where I was supposed to be in my studies. I would be laying on the couch each time she came, wearing that stupid cast. She always wanted to hang around and talk a little. But I never was in the talkative mood, especially when I'm laying there in a body cast with a bar between my legs. Thinking back, I should have asked her to empty my bed pan. I bet she would not have wanted to hang around then. Like my brother and sister, she would've got somewhere. I mean... right?

Eventually, however, the cast came off. Again I was confined to a wheel chair for a while. It was a good year before I was walking and was 100 percent. The operation did help. I gained an inch or so in height and I was proud of it. I ended up being five feet tall. Sure it's not much, but it was better than

nothing.

Thank you Scottish Wright. Thank you Mom and Dad. And thank you Bret and Myra, for putting up with a cranky brother like me.

When I turned 15 my parents started talking about a divorce. That came as a shock to me and my brother and sister. It was my Daddy who was pushing it. I think he found a girlfriend at Owen's where he worked. This was also 1970, a time when everyone was getting a divorce, or so it seemed. From '68 through 1970 I used to watch world news every night. I was interested in the stories about Vietnam, Kent State, the hippies, and so on. But when Mom and Daddy got a divorce later that year things like news were not as important. I was kinda sick inside. The very next year, 1971, I got my driver's license and my dear mother bought me a 1970 Ford Mustang Mach I. I was so proud of that car. I nearly washed the color off of it. That car made me somebody. At school I felt cool having a cool car. I still got messed with but not as much. My car also gave me freedom. I didn't have to stay at home and be sad. I now went to Elberton a lot to see Bo. We did a lot of stuff together, rode around, hung out or whatever. I enjoyed visiting Bo. Tim was a thinker. Tim was fun. Tim was funny. And Tim and I were best friends. Plus, Timbo knew where all the good fish ponds were. Not that we were that big on fishing. It's just that it was always relaxing sitting under some shade tree with a fishing pole in hand. We both liked telling stories and laughing.

One time Tim and I had walked from his parents house to a fish pond about a mile away. The fish pond was just off of this long dirt road. Well one day we were walking back to the house. We're on this dirt road and all of a sudden we hear this loud car coming our way. We step to the side of the road and as we did this the loud pickup truck comes flying by. I mean this truck was flying. Well, the truck goes past and around a curve, then disappears out of sight. But suddenly we hear this loud bomb-bomb-bomb. At first Tim and I both thought the truck had crashed. But that wasn't the case because we could still hear the truck's motor as it kept barreling along. Tim and I walked around the curve and that's when we saw it. Just off the dirt road and down in a ditch was this big tool box. The kind that rides up against the can of a truck and is *supposed* to be bolted in place. Well, Timbo goes down into the ditch and opens the toolbox, while I'm standing up on the dirt road. The toolbox was really rusted out. I could see why the guy driving the truck never bothered to come back for it. The toolbox was empty, but for one thing that got Bo's attention. After reaching inside he said to me, "Look what I found." Tim then held up a pair of the biggest panties that I've ever seen in my life. "If those belong to that truck driver's wife, then I feel sorry for him," I said to Timbo. We laughed and laughed. Tim kept these panties. He put them in the glove-box of his car. Anytime somebody needed a light or something, Tim would tell them to look in the glove box. They would then find these panties in the process and the joking would begin. Tim would tell how he had once picked up this cute little thang who was thumbing for a ride. Tim kept those panties for years and told that same old story about the cute little thang who was thumbing. That was Bo. Like everyone else, we gradually grew older, but we never seemed to change much. Once when I was, say, 21, Ted (Timbo's father) had a family Fourth of July barbeque at his house. Most of all the Dyes were there, and everyone was sitting in folded chairs, eating barbeque and drinking iced tea. Timbo and I were sitting on a blanket eating. Like everyone else, we were enjoying the beautiful day, the beautiful company, and the beautiful weather. But then form out of nowhere this black cloud appears and it starts raining cast and dogs. Just like that. It was so weird because the sun was still shining. Well, everyone jumps up and runs for the house. Some ran up on the porch. Some ran underneath the carport. I went underneath the carport. It was closest. I had just stopped to catch my breath when I hear Bo calling my name. "Ank!" I look back and there's Bo still sitting on the blanket. He is soaked, but he is still holding his plate of barbeque. "Ank!" he yells again. "Come on back, Ank. A little rain won't hurt ya. It feels good." I guess it was

because Bo looked so ridiculous sitting in the rain that I decided to join him. With barbeque and also tea in hand, I went back out and sat in that brief rain shower with Bo. He was right, it felt good. Our kin folks thought we were crazy. But we didn't care. We were simply having fun. It was a great Fourth of July weekend.

Before going any further I like to mention that I quit high school at the age of 17 . . . Why? I think it had something to do with my size and some of the things I had to put up with at school. It had nothing to do with not liking school. I had nothing to do with my grades. But it had everything to do with people I felt were out to get me. The day I went out and found all the tires on my car flat, was it. Someone at school had let the air out of all four tires. I guess that was my breaking point. Enough was enough. I'd had my fill of friends that I couldn't trust. It's a shame. Which one or ones did me dirty I'll never know. I guess they got the laugh they wanted.

It was easy getting a job as an unskilled laborer back then. I started out driving nails, then helping to install heating and air, painted... when it got cold, I'd find work in warehouses driving lifts or putting up stock. I moved around a lot. When I got tired of one job, I moved to another. And then I was short so some people would hire me and some would not. I had a way of knowing if somebody didn't like me from the jump or right off the rip. The look on their face would tell it all. Of course, I began to feel bad about dropping out of school. Had I stayed, then maybe I could have been my own boss, or had my own business. Hired my own people.

In 1979 I got a job driving a wrecker for a guy named Bill Witton. He owned a self service gas station just off the 285 expressway that circles Atlanta and Camp Creek Parkway. Bill's station was pretty big. It had a car-wash, a five bay garage, display room, and a gas hut for those buying gas. I enjoyed driving the wrecker and going places. By then I no longer had the mustang. Now I drove a 1971 Road Runner. Sure it was old, but it was show-room all the way. The car was black, big mags and white lettered tires, pistol grip four speed, diamond tuck interior, spoiler on front and back, a tunnel ram hood with a built 383 mig under the hood. I can say that I really knew how to work on a hot rod back then. I was proud of that car because of the attention it got. Girls especially liked it. I wasn't making a whole lot of money, but I made up for it by using Bills shop and tools to keep my car right.

With a nice car, I started hanging out at nice clubs. Modeen's by the airport was a cool place to go on Friday nights. And then there was Dudley's off of Old National Highway. These were two of the better clubs in South Fulton County.

Occasionally I'd go back to Elberton and visit with Bo and see a few relatives. But Bo was married by now and things were not quite the same. We couldn't hang out and go places with his wife standing guard over him. And so I continued to spend most of my time in South Fulton, driving the wrecker and hanging out at the clubs. I was 25 when I met the girl of my dreams. I met her at Modeen's one Friday night. She had long dark hair, long shapely legs, and she had a beautiful smile with these beautiful brown eyes. Her name was Tammy. She was 19 and she was hotter than a two dollar pistol. Tammy was a young Philly. She was wile and she was fun. She filled in the empty and lonely places life had left inside of me. I guess the only drawback I had dating a younger girl was Tammy's ways. She liked going her Qualudes. These were a downer type pill with a 714 stamped on the side. Everyone called Qualudes "Ludes" or "714s". I'll have to admit I wasn't much into Qualudes. They would knock you out real quick like. But if that's what Tammy liked, that's what Tammy got as far as I was concerne.d

I had a cool ride. I worked, and so buying for Tammy wasn't too bad. For once in my life other guys and other girls were noticing me. And it was all because of Tammy. I was somebody now. Not just a

short little drop out. And it felt good. Like the time Timbo and I ate barbeque in the rain. I liked this new life style and hanging with people who lived in the fastlanes. These were pretty people, even if I was not. I can say that I was a pretender, however. Some times when I was given a Lude to take, I only pretended to take it. Everyone I was sitting with thought for sure I had taken my 714. this would be at the Club of course. Later I would act like I was feeling the pill's effect. For the first couple of months, Tammy had me believing that I was in Heaven. Tammy got what she wanted and I got what I wanted. However, I was about to learn that in the grand scheme of things, life is never that easy.

Once Friday night I arrived at Modeen's at my normal time, a little after 9:00. I was surprised when I did a walk through and failed to locate Tammy. I immediately called her house but got no answer. I figured that she must be on her way. I waited and waited but Tammy never showed up. Finally around 11:30 or so this guy who I had seen around the club off and on came up to me. He said that he had just left Dudley's off of Old National Highway. He also said that he had seen Tammy there with this other guy. My heart fell into my stomach. I didn't know what to say. I was hoping this guy was telling me a lie. Nevertheless, I got in my Road Runner and made a b-line to Dudley's in record time.

Although it was dark out, I parked my car so that seeing Dudley's front and side entrance was easy. For an hour or so, I sat in my car listening to Bruce Springsteen's "Darkness on the Edge of Town." About 1:00 or so, I spotted Tammy and this guy walking out of the club. Tammy was her beautiful self, walking, talking, laughing and holding hands with this guy. Actually the guy didn't look bad. At first glance he looked to be Tammy's age or older. He was taller than Tammy and me. As expected, the two went to a car and left. Naturally I followed them. They went to some apartments close by and parked. I seen them get out of the car and go to one of the upstairs apartments. I seen when the apartment lights came on. For a time, I sat in my car watching the apartment from a safe distance. When the lights in the apartment went out, I drove off. God, I was hurt. Over and over I asked myself what had I don't wrong? Why would she do me this way? I think while I was driving home it dawned on me – I wasn't Tammy's lover. No, I was her go-for. I'd go for this and I'd go for that. But mostly I went for her dope. Now I was getting pissed.

I finally talked with Tammy that very next morning on the phone. She must have thought I was a real Willy Lump-Lump because she gave me this cock-and-bull story about pending the night with a sick girl friend. "Sure. Sure. I understand," I told her sympathetically. But inside I was fuming. Two can play this game, this lie game, I thought. That's when I mentioned to Tammy that I had to pickup some Ludes later. I also mentioned that I was feeling a little under the weather myself. If she wanted to, I'd let her drive me to a friend's house to pick them up. Tammy jumped at the offer like a kid jumps on a trampoline. She made it to the house about 2:00. she was quick, too quick. We drove to a remote area outside of the small town of Fairburn as I pointed the way. Tammy didn't know where we were going. She was simply driving and going anywhere I told her to go. Turn here. Turn there. When we got far down a dirt road, I told her to pull over. That's when I really acted a fool and shod my ass. I yelled and told Tammy about seeing her with another man at Dudley's and following them to his apartment. My eyes watered when I mentioned seeing the lights go out. I told her that I should kill both of us, and pulled out a gun. Of course I had no intentions of shooting Tammy, nor myself. I loved us too much for that. But I did want to hurt her and make her cry like I had hurt and cried.

It worked, Tammy started crying. She promised me, she would never cheat on me again. After looking into her eyes it didn't take long for me to forgive her. We kissed and even had sex. Afterwards we rood around for a while and talked. It was nice. Tammy eventually dropped me off at the house that evening. I was supposed to meet her at Modeen's later. But before 9:00 rolled around, before I could head out for the club, the police came to my door. I was then arrested and charged with rape. Tammy

had went to the police and told everything that happened. She even said that I forced to to have sex, I had a gun, I was crazy...

For what I did. For my stupidity. For my foolishness, I received a 15 year prison sentence. I couldn't believe it. I wasn't a rapist. I wasn't a madman. I was simply blinded by love. I was sentenced in 1981 and by the end of that year, I ended up at a prison just outside of Columbus, Georgia called Jack T. Ruthledge. For those first few months in prison, I was really down and out. If it was for my family, especially my dear mother, I don't know what would have happened to me. Not only was I hurt by not being able to be with my family, but I was still hurt and in a way heart-broken by Tammy. I really did love that girl.

They say time heals all hurts and slowly I began to get over Tammy. Ruthledge has a GED program that I got into. I wasn't a dumb guy so it didn't take nothing for me to get my GED. Next, I enrolled in the College program Ruthledge had to offer. Teachers from Brewton Raker College made several trips to the prison each week. College courses, even in prison, were not easy. Inmates really had to earn their 2 year degree. And yes, I did earn mine. I graduated in 1985 and I am officially a graduate of Breton Parker College. It really made me feel good to graduate. I was very proud of my 2 year college degree. After college, I spent my free time writing home, writing to Timbo, and writing to anyone else that wanted to hear from me. Tim had deforced his cute little wife. His ex-wife and their baby boy were now living in South Carolina. Tim seemed pretty upset. He said that he had been drinking a lot. I told him to keep his chin up. But in all actuality, I might've been drinking a lot too. A woman can make a man do a lot of self-destructive things. Heck was I one to know this.

I was released from prison in September of 1987 after serving 6 ½ years of my 15 year sentence. My dear mother came to pick me up. I had years of parole left but that wasn't bothering me. Finding a job was on the top of my agenda. My friend Bill Witton was more than willing to give me my old wrecker driving job back. I in turn was glad to start getting a pay check. I worked, saved my money, and before long I had a nice little nest egg. After a couple of years I decided it was time to move on with my life. I didn't want to be an underpaid wrecker driver forever. So in 1989 I moved to the coast (Brunswick, Georgie) and ended up buying a used 20-foot crab boat. Plus, I found a part time job working at Dixie Tire and Service. I liked crabbing. It was really nice going out on the water each morning and checking my crab pots. Learning the water took time and a little getting used to. I first had to know when there would be a high tide or low tide. I also had to learn the other crabbers on the water. Crabbing could be dangerous work, especially if one worked alone as most crabbers did. Like one afternoon during the month of November, I was out in my boat bringing in some crab traps or pots. During cold weather crabbing is really slow so I'm bringing in some of my traps. This was a little after midday. There was a clear blue sky overhead, and this beautiful full moon. That's right, a full moon. It felt great being on the water and seeing this full moon over head. Well, I didn't realize it at the time, but the tide had changed on me. I was now going out. And with a full moon overhead meant the water goes back out to sea even faster than it normally would. So I've just come out of the St. Simmon's Sound and I'm headed down the river in a boat loaded with crab baskets. All of a sudden the boat gets stuck in the sand. I'm in the middle of the river wondering why I'm stuck. When I looked around I can actually see the water level in the river dropping. In a of minutes my boat and me were no longer even in the water. Now we were on this sandbar in the middle of the river. Water was on both sides of me but I was stuck on this sandbar island. It took a good 12 hours before the tides changed and the water started refilling the river. In the meantime, not a single boat came by. I sat on that sandbar in my boat for hours in the cold. I liked to have froze! I survived that cold night but after that you can bet that I checked and rechecked my tide chart before venturing out in my boat again. Live and learn, I guess.

Living on the coast was very expensive. Boat parts were expensive. Housing was expensive. Food was expensive. I can't remember anything that was cheap. One day I was riding along a back road and I see this old rusted-out pick-up sitting up on black beside somebody's house. The truck was full of unk and trash. This old fella was outside so I pulled up and asked him if he wanted to sell the truck. I used to see trucks like his sell for a couple hundred dollars all day long in Atlanta. The guy said he'd take \$400 for it. I looked. The truck didn't even have a motor or transmission. It didn't take long for me to grow tired of Brunswick. I met some good people, I saw many interesting things, but I could not get ahead money-wise. But the end of '91 I was back in South Fulton County and good ol' College Park. I went to Elberton and visited Timbo a couple of times also. Tim was always glad to see me. As I was glad to see him. The last time I visited Tim I had brought along a small aluminum 10 foot fishing boat with a over-sized 7-hp motor. We decided that we'd go fishing and make it an all-day thing. So on our way to the Clark Hill Reservoir, we stopped and bought some bait, fuel, snacks, ice, and a case of beer for the long day ahead of us. To be totally honest with you, I would have bene happy with a six-pack. But Tim bought the beer, so I couldn't say much. Once we were at the lake and while unloading the boat and supplies I did mention to Tim that this was supposed to be a fun day of fishing, not a day for getting drunk. Especially not on the water. In fact, the Clark Hill was not only a huge lake but it was also deep. The last thing I wanted was for one or both of us to drown.

Tim agreed 100 percent and we headed out on the water with the same mind set. I was driving the boat and so I would shut off the boat's motor from time to tim. Timbo and I would drift and fish. As we fished, I couldn't help but notice Tim drinking one beer after another. I asked him to slow down. I hadn't even had one yet. He was scaring me. Then, in a very deep part of the lake is where it happened. We were out in the middle of the lake. We were fishing. No, I was fishing; Tim was drinking. I was uncomfortable. Land was so far away and Tim wasn't acting right. Finally and without warning, Tim simply stands up in that 10-foot boat and announces that he has to tinkle. Immediately the boat started rocking and Tim fell, landing on the side of the boat. The boat flips on its side and in comes all of this water. I screamed, "Timbo, you're sinking the boat!" Tim was quick. Even drinking he realized the boat was filling with water. In 3 more seconds it would go under. So Tim rolls to the middle of the boat. It leveled out just enough. We didn't sink but we had a boat full of water. Each time oen of us moved, one of the boat's two back corners would dip and lake water would rush in became perfectly still. At my feet and under all that water inside the boat was an empty Pringles can. I got the can and slowly, carefully, began scooping water out. It took every bit of 30 nerve-wracking minutes to empty the boat. I told Timbo that fishing was over for the day. I started the boat's motor and headed back toward shore. In a rather harsh tone of voice, I told Timbo, "Don't stand up in the boat either!" Tim looked at me with these big puppy dog eyes and said, "Ank, I gotta tinkle." I handed him the empty Pringles can.

That was the lat time Time and I ever went fishing together. I never knew Tim had a real drinking problem until that day. In my heart I think his divorce had something to do with it. But I can't talk much. I wasn't doing that well either. There were times when I would drink more than I should've. The years were ticking by and it seemed that I was getting nowhere fast. Here I was 38 years old, an ex-con, a loser and a failure. I'm working for Bill on the weekdays driving his wrecker. I'm working for Bill on the weekends inside his gas hut. On the self-service pay booth. I was struggling, that much was for sure. One Sunday, I was home alone when several of the fellas stopped by for a hwile. I had been depressed about so much. Sometimes I'd get so depressed that I had even counsidered taking my own life. I even bought a pistol to do the job with.

Well anyway, my buddies dropped by. I told them I'd been feeling a little down and out. One pulled out a joint and we smoked it. My eyes got red real quick, and things were funny. One of my other

friends goes out to his car and brings in an ice cooler filled with iced down beer. We drink, all four of us. Next think you know we're out of beer but someone has a bottle passing it around. We drink. I'm not a liquor drinker, but that day I was. I think the joint and beer got me started. Then after I'd gotten so high it didn't matter what I was drinking. We load up in one of fella's car and they drop me off at work. I was shit-faced. They guy working knew I was shit-faced, but he left me there drunk and alone. Well, almost alone – I had my pistol hidden inside the gas hut. I always kept it there because once I was robbed at gunpoint by two teens in 1988. and so, my friend who had been working in the gas hut leaves with his girlfriend, and there I am inside the gas hut on a slow Sunday absolutely shit-faced drunk out of my mind and thank God nobody was stopping for gas. There's no way I could have ran a credit card through a machine or counted change. My friends have left me I'm sitting inside this gas hut crying. I don't know why I started crying. I felt alone. I was out of my head. And just as I think things can't get any worse, in drives Tammy. She stops gets out of her car and starts pumping her gas. I'm sitting inside the gas hut not believing my eyes. It's Tammy. The girl I had loved. The girl of my dreams. The girl who had sent me to prison. The more I think about it, the crazier I become. Before she can get her purse out of her car, there I am. I have gotten my pistol out of its secret hiding place. I'm gonna teach Tammy a lesson. I'm gonna tell her how much she hurt me. I'm gonna tell her how much I loved her. If she promises not to cheat, I might forgive her and take her back. I walk up behind her before she can turn around with gun in hand, I'm there just as she is about to get out of her car. She sees me and the gun and slides to the passengers seat. "We gotta talk," I said to her in a slurred voice. I don't know why, but I found myself driving her car. I actually drove her car around the parking lot of the gas station and then stopped. In my mind we had drove far enough. Now it was time to talk.

But! When I looked into Tammy's face, I saw right away that the girl I had was not Tammy! It was not Tammy! I was drunk. I was shocked and even in my confused state of mind I felt like a fool. I got out of the girl's car, this stranger's car, and as I was walking back to the gas hut she jumped out of her car and ran across the lot to McDonald's. Needless to say, she called the police. The police arrested me and the police report stated that I was intoxicated. I remember waking up in jail. I thought that I was dreaming. My head hurt and I remembered Tammy. I wondered if I hurt her? But then I also remembered the stranger. That girl sitting in the passenger's seat. Who was she? Why was I in jail? What had I done? It didn't take long after coming to that a police officer told me what I had done. I was fingerprinted and a day later taken to an arraignment. The judge told me that I would be charged with armed robbery because I took a car, aggravated assault because I had a gun, and kidnapping because I drove around the parking lot with a girl in my car. The girl turned out to be a 24-year-old who worked nearby. I didn't know her, had never seen her or never talked with her until that day. My court appointed lawyer told me that I didn't have a chance. I tried to explain what happened earlier, the drink, the liquor, the pills my friends had given me saying, "It would make me feel better, no depression..." My lawyer said that it didn't matter. That chances were I was going to get a life sentence. And so, I ended up with 20 years. The guy who had worked in the gas hut earlier and left me there drunk got fired.

I was sick. Going back to prison was the last thing I wanted. My family were mad at me. I was mad at me. Inside I felt as if I were dying. I wanted to die!!

I went first through Jackson State Prison to be classified. After taking various tests at Jackson (a process that took 11 weeks) I was then sent to Hays State Prison, a close security facility located on the upper corner of northwest Georgia, bordering Alabama and Tennessee. Hays was no joke. Men were housed there who would never get out of prison. Fights, stabbings and even a killing or two were the norm. and that was on a slow month. But to top it all off, once I got to Hays I was placed in the worst dorm there, which was E-2. Or, referred to by inmates as "Thunder Dorm." That was because of all

the fights and such. I stayed mostly to myself while in Thunder Dorm. I learned very quickly that having too many friends could be trouble. Some of the older inmates befriended new arrivals just to see what they had. At some point later, the new arrivals would be robbed of their possessions. It was while in Thunder Dorm, in the spring of '94, that I received my Grid Sheet from the Parole Board. I had been waiting for it to arrive. Basically a Grid Sheet lets a person know how much time they must serve on their sentence before having a shot at parole. A Grid Sheet doesn't give you parole. Rather, it lets you know when one comes up for parole. My grid called for me to serve eleven years on my 20 year sentence. Eleven years! That bit of news floored me. I expected to serve 5 to 8 years before coming up for parole. But 11! I could not imagine myself doing that many years in prison, especially in Thunder Dorm. I wasn't just thinking about myself and all that time... my father, my dear old Dad, has visited his doctor and was told that he had prostate cancer. My father didn't know but the doctor said that he'd had the cancer for years. That wasn't a good thing to hear. I really began to worry about my father and my mother. I wrote to them often. In my letters I told both of my parents over and over how sorry I was for coming back to prison. Over and over, I also told them how very much I loved them. Daddy was Daddy and Mama was Mama. They both assured me that they still loved me and forgave me. But in my heart I knew they were awfully hurt. My mother was not going so well either. Health-wise she was okay. But she was alone (she never remarried after her and my father divorced) and she wanted me home. Of course I couldn't do anything but time. Georgia had me and they would not think about letting me go until my 11 years were up. And my parole date was only a maybe. That's all. A maybe. I prayed a lot while at Hays. I didn't pray for me, however; I prayed for my family, my relatives, and friends who I'd left behind. Plus, there were guys that I'd met at Hays who were having a hard time of it. I prayed for them too. I can only hope God was listening. There were so many nights – I would lay in my bunk and replay my life over and over in my head. I couldn't believe that I, Anthony Daye, good son, good worker, and all-around nice guy, was in prison for a second time. I couldn't believe it. I was better than that, I told myself. Or was I? Time really makes one think, and also makes one take a long hard look at themselves. I did. Sometimes, I looked at myself as being alright. But there were many times I saw myself as a loser, someone with no talent, who couldn't make it in the real world. I thought about Tammy and the clubs. I never should have pretended to be somebody I was not. It got me nowhere fast.

The guards at Hays were so-so. While there, I heard about Sergeant Star and another guard who were arrested at the prison for killing an inmate who was locked in the hole. The only way these two guards were caught was because the dead inmate had written numerous letters home, telling his mother how Sergeant Star and another guard came to his cell each night and beat him. As an inmate myself, I can only guess how horrible it must have been being locked in a small cell and knowing each day (after the sun went down) two goons were coming to beat you and there was nothing you could do to stop it.

There were several fights between guards and inmates while I was at Hays. I watched a “big” guard get beat down once day by an inmate who had nothing to lose. The inmate got tired of the guard's mouth. The guard was alone when two men got into it. I think the guard was surprised by the inmate's ability to go toe to toe with him. I'm not taking sides, but I will say that the guard did not know how to talk to a person. He brought on the whole thing.

Some guards – few – treated inmates like humans. These were the ones who got respect out of inmates. Some guards simply didn't like an inmate and thought everyone wearing a blue shirt was stupid and not worth a dime.

For my first few months at Hays, I was assigned to the cigarette butt detail. Back in the nineties, inmates were allowed to smoke. So cigarette butts were all over the sidewalks inside the prison. That

meant each morning another inmate and I had the really lame job of picking up butts, paper ,or anything else laying around. We were always escorted by a guard, and nine times out of ten that guard would be Officer Sherman. Like most of the other guards, Sherman didn't like inmates. He didn't speak to inmates. He didn't get close to inmates. He didn't touch inmates unless he had to. Once I overheard Sherman talking with another guard. Sherman then stated that all inmates were dumb as Hell, and he didn't trust none of them. Sherman reminded me of that Prison Boss on the movie "Cool Hand Luke." That Prison Boss never spoke, wore dark sunglasses, and would just watch while others worked. In the movie, that's the same guard who shot Cool Hand Luke, by the way. Anyway, one morning another inmate named Rochester and I were out picking up butts and putting them in the plastic bags we carried. Naturally, Officer Sherman was in tow. He always kept his distance. He walked several feet behind me and Rochester. He never spoke, just walked alone, watching and listening, as we (Rochester and I) talked, joked, and carried on. Rochester was a very smart guy who (like myself) tried to make light of a bad situation. That's why we joked around so much as we worked. If Rochester or I missed a butt as we walked alone, Sherman would stop and then, using the toe of his polished shoe, would point to the missed butt. All without saying a word. Well, this morning as we were all doing the cigarette butt thing, from out of the blue this really big buzzard swooped down and circled the three of us a couple of times before flying away. What was so crazy about it was that the buzzard got really close to us before it flew off and we all three stood there watching it. That's when I suddenly looked over at Rochester and in a voice full of excitement said, "Wow, did you see that Rochester? That was a wild chicken... a real wild chicken. Can you believe it?!" Rochester immediately broke out laughing. We joked around so much that he knew right away that I was just clowning around. But the funny thing was that Officer Sherman didn't know. He thought I was serious. It never dawned on him that I had lived most of my life in the country and probably knew as much or more than he did about animals or birds. So Sherman started laughing and then for the first time ever he spoke to me: "Dye, that was not a chicken. That was a damn Buzzard." He was still laughing, but I quickly replied, "No sir, that was a wild chicken alright. I've seen them lots of times in National Geographic. They're nasty as Hell, too. If you don't watch out, they'll crap all over you."

Sherman continued to laugh as Rochester and I started back picking up butts. Occasionally Rochester and I would look at one another knowingly and grin. We had beaten Sherman at his own game. And it felt good, playing the part of a dumb inmate. Like he thought we were.

My big break came early one morning in 1996. I believe it was June 28th. I was working and told to pack my stuff. I'd be transferring immediately. I didn't know where I'd be going to, but any prison had to be better than Hays. After two and a half years inside the razor wire of a living Hell, I was finally leaving. How was I a happy camper.

It was while on the transview bus that I and several others were informed that we would be going South to Dooly State Prison. I asked if anyone on the bus knew anything about Dooly. One inmate had been there before. He told the rest of us that Dooly was located 40 miles below Macon, just off of Interstate 75. That would make Dooly about 140 miles south of Atlanta. The inmate on the bus also said that Dooly was infested with swarms and swarms of gnats. At first, I thought the guy was pulling our legs. I'd certainly never heard of gnats being a problem anywhere. This was a first. Yet, once we arrived at Dooly and stepped off the bus, I knew the gnats story was for real. The prison guards as Dooly had us all line up beside the bus in order to remove our leg chains and handcuffs. Immediately my ears, eyes, nose and mouth were attacked by gnats, swarms of gnats. I'd never in my life seen anything like it. Even the guards were being attacked by the annoying insects. I and the others were relieved when we finally went inside the I.D. Room to inventory our few belongings. Inside the I.D. Room, where it was air conditioned, there were no gnats and I was glad of it.

I'll *never* forget my first meal at Dooly. That first day, after the guards had inventoried our things, we were sent to the chow hall for our midday meal. At that time Dooly's Chow Hall had no screen doors, no fans, no air conditioning. It did have flies, gnats, and was very hot. Sweltering. In the chow hall, I got my tray and sat down at a table with the other new arrivals. We had soup and sandwiches that day with watery tea in which the ice had long since melted. To my surprise (and unlike Hays) I could actually see seasoning in my soup. I even mentioned this to the guys seated around me. "Hey guys, we got real pepper in our soup," I said cheerfully. Another guy said, "you'd better look again." I did. A closer inspection is when I saw the gnats floating across the soup's surface. Needless to say, I did not eat the soup.

Dooly was no Country Club, but the guards were nicer and talked to us like humans. Unless you gave them reason not to, that is. Dooly housed around 1,100 inmates when I arrived there. It was either strange or very coincidental but I was placed in down E-2. Just like at Hays. But Dooly's E-2 was no Thunder Dorm. In fact, it was laid back and I quickly made friends with several of the fellas. They liked me because I was a plain talker, and short. They thought short was cool. And no, I wasn't Cool Hand Like, but I was easy going. Boy, I slept so good that first night in E-2. I didn't have to worry about being robbed or stabbed to death in my sleep.

My new detail was working in the prison kitchen. I was put in the tray room washing dishes. I didn't care too much for my new detail but at least I didn't have Officer Sherman watching over my back. I did what I had to do. The tray room was hot and humid, but I managed. Because I worked so hard and stayed out of trouble, six months later the head-hauncho in the kitchen made me the new diet-cook. That was a big step up for me. I had a room of my own for cooking special meals for inmates. I began to call this diet room "The Hut," as in diet hut. There was a grill, and a refrigerator loaded with butter, cheese, bread, etc. I not only cooked for inmates, but also for myself and sometimes a friend or two. I told everyone that I was the "Head Nut 'n the Hut." They would laugh. I tried to do a good job for those I cooked for. I came to know all my diet guys by name. For bad or for good, I always put more food on their trays than I was supposed to. They must have appreciated it because every now and then one of my diet guys would give me something off the prison story. Which, I thought, was very nice of them. I stayed in the diet kitchen for years cooking. I stayed out of trouble and never caused any problems. The kitchen staff liked that kind of stuff. I figured the parole board would like it too.

Time passed slowly. During my free time I started to write a collection of songs. All of which I am very proud of. Why? Because they are great songs and my own special style. I counted years, not months.

During 1998, talk was circulating throughout the prison that inmates all across the state were not making parole when their names came up. I thought about it a lot. I tried not to, but I worried.

I had so much on my mind. Daddy had prostate cancer. It had spread into his bones. It didn't look good. That very next year, my sister's husband died. Ted was a good friend and a great father. He left behind three lovely kids.

My dear mother was having her share of problems also. In 1999 her little house caught fire. It was grease left on the stove that started the fire. My mother was walking to her mail box at the time. By the time fire fighters arrived the whole inside of mother's house had received fire and smoke damage. There was no way she could live in the house. My mother has no relatives. My sister was living with her daughter while helping her to raise three fatherless children. My brother lived in another county

close to his job. He had no driver's license, so was unable to make trips down to see or check on Mama. She had lost her family in a fire when she was eleven. This time she lost all of her belongings from smoke. My mother is very proud. She asked no one for help. Instead she moved into a small plywood shed on her property. She had no insurance and received only a small disability check each month. Things were bad for her and this weighed heavily on me.

I prayed for God to look after my mother. She was too old to look after herself. I worried so much that I would actually become sick to my stomach. Mama needed me and I wasn't there for her.

But the bad news didn't stop with Mama. My Daddy came to visit a couple of times and he wasn't looking well at all. I could not believe what I was seeing. My Daddy, my friend, my hero, this man I adored, was wilting away. We talked and I wanted to cry, but I didn't. The last thing Daddy asked before leaving from his last visit was, "Do you want to be buried beside me?" My answer was a simple, "yes." Daddy wanted us to be buried next to his parents, Mama Dye and papa Charlie. Daddy wanted me there with him in our hometown cemetery. I was so humbled that day. I'll never forget it.

The year 2000 finally arrived. I called it the Y2K year because everyone feared that electrical devices would start shutting off all at midnight 2000, causing all kinds of problems. For a while that's all they talked about on the news. Everyone was expecting the worst. When nothing happened, I remembered that old fable about Chicken Little, and how the sky was falling. That is what it was like back then. I'm sure that others remember it too. Also in the year 2000, my dear mother was still living in the plywood shed. She alone had managed to get a little power to the shed by pulling a drop cord from the burnt house. Fortunately the house still had power. Mama also rigged a telephone line that ran from the burnt house to her shed. That way, I was able to call her from time to time. Mama cried a lot when I called. She had no money to fix her house. She could only exist in a small shed the size of my prison cell. She was praying that I'd come home in 2004. But she already was 65 and disabled. She kept telling me that she would make it until I came home. I was praying that she was right.

Something very strange happened during the month of April 2000 that I think is worth mentioning. One day after coming in from my kitchen detail I decided to take a little cat-nap. I'd probably been sleeping for 30 minutes or so when all of a sudden I heard this loud boom inside my head. Just one massive "BOOM" that caused me to sit up straight in my bunk. With no one else in the room, I immediately thought of Daddy. I can't say why, but in my heart I think God was telling me or warning me that Daddy might be sick or maybe even dead. Without hesitation I jumped out of my bunk, hurried downstairs to a line of pay phones and quickly punched in Daddy's phone number – 361-2291. Several rings later, and to my relief, Daddy answered his phone. I was so relieved to hear Daddy's voice. We talked. I didn't tell him about the loud boom that I'd heard in my head. I would have felt silly. Although Daddy didn't sound well, he nevertheless assured me that he was fine. Our 15 minutes' phone time seemed to fly by. Then, right before the line went dead, I said to my Daddy, "I love you Daddy." He said to me, "I love you too." And that was it. Our 15 minutes were up. The phone line went dead. I never spoke to my Daddy again after that. I can only remember and cherish that last call.

On April 16th that same month, one week after my call, Daddy passed away. To this day I will always believe that God wanted me to tell my Daddy goodbye. I also learned that a few days before Daddy died, he had bought us a plot in the Elbert County Cemetery close to Mama Dye and Papa Charlie. Daddy always ended his letters by writing the words "Love always, Dear Old Dad," at the bottom. Thanks Dad. I miss you, and love you too.

I continued to worry about Mama. I continued to write my songs. I had so much time on my hands

and things on my mind. I needed to write songs. Someday, maybe I will sell one and make enough to fix my mother's house. If I ever get out of prison, I plan to put my music online. My songs told a lot about me and people I had known throughout my life. Somebody would want to hear them.

The years continued to pass on by.

I think the biggest event in my life following Daddy's death was 9/11. I happened to be in the dorm watching television when the morning news broke in showing live pictures of the Twin Towers, the smoke, and the jet crashing into the second tower. Most everyone watching felt helpless and sick that day. The guys couldn't believe what they were seeing. Truthfully, I couldn't believe my eyes either. I reckon that ugly day in America's history will forever live in my memory. All the fellows in prison made me proud that day and the following days. If possibly every man at Dooly Prison would have gladly went to New York to help in any way, or we all would have gladly joined up to fight with the army or another branch of the service for that matter. We wanted some payback. From whoever had done this awful thing to us. We felt united.

November of 2003 had me full of cheer. My counselor called me up to her office one day and said that the parole board wanted a parole address from me. I gave them my mother's address in College Park. I was nervous and excited. I could only wait in a hurry for 2004 to roll around. That would be the year the parole board would give me a parole answer. My counselor said things were looking really good and chances were that I would make parole.

Back at the dorm, I called Mama and I called Timbo to give them the good news. Bo said I could parole out at his place if I wanted. But I knew Timbo liked to drink, and I was afraid that if a parole officer went to his house to check it out, they might see beer cans or something that would be a red flag and would keep me from getting out. My mother didn't drink nor smoke. I knew that would be my best address and I explained to Timbo.

It seemed like it took forever but 2004 finally arrived. I think I had counted the days. I waited nervously for news from the board. I bit my nails. Then on April 16th, my new counselor called down to the dorm and asked for me to come to his office. As I left the building to go up front, all the guys were shouting encouragements to me. "Good luck Dye," and "this is the news you've been waiting for, Dye," plus, "You're on your way home, Dye." As I walked to my counselor's office my heart was beating like a drum in my chest. I kept remembering that April 16th was the same day in which my Daddy had died. Was this a good sign or a bad sign? I found out the minute I walked in my new counselor's door. Without looking up from the paperwork in front of him, my new counselor (an obese black man who I had never met until that day) reached onto his desk and then handed me an unsealed envelope from the parole board. "Have a nice day," he said. I took the letter without saying a word, turned, then left. I already knew what the letter said. Had I made parole, my counselor would have had me sign various papers. No, this letter wasn't a parole grant. As I walked back to my building I opened the envelope slowly. I then read the letter. It said for me to serve five more years my new parole date would be in April 2009. My heart fell into my stomach, and I wanted to throw up. All my plans of getting out were now out the window. I didn't understand why I had been turned down for parole. I did the 11 years like my grid-sheet called for. I stayed out of trouble, and worked without complaining. I was a model inmate.

The guys in the dorm knew the news was bad by the look on my face. Like so many others before me, I had been shafted by the board. That night I laid in my bunk for a long time thinking about the board's letter. The sadness that I felt gradually went away. Now I was pissed. The very next day, I went to the

head person in charge of the kitchen and told him that I wanted out. “Why?” he asked. “The staff always hates to lose a good worker.”

I explained that I had played by the rules but the parole board changed those rules in the middle of the game. For years, I had done what was asked of me. I worked when needed. I put up with more than I my share of verbal abuse. I'd been burnt, scratched, and worked like a dog. Now enough was enough. It was time for me to be lazy. For me the kitchen was a thing of the past. Several days later, I was reassigned as a dorm orderly. Each dorm had about 20 dorm orderlies – overkill. These were guys who cleaned up in the mornings. A lazy man's job. I did nothing.

Having so much free time on my hands was turning out to be better than expected. I quickly got caught up on my letter-writing. I worked on my songs, and I even read a couple of good books – something I never had much time for while working in the kitchen.

One day while in the prison library, I was looking and trying to decide what book to read next. By chance, I happened to pick up a book on art. Curiously, I flipped through the pages. Right then my eyes were exposed to all of these beautiful works of art. One of the artists who created these works was a man called Pablo Picasso. I could not take my eyes off of his works. All of them really fascinated me. Works like, Three Musicians, Violin and Palette, Les Damaoilles d'Auvignon, Three Women at the Spring, and especially Guernica had my mind and my eyes racing. There were other artists and other beautiful works, but truthfully I liked them all. After a while, I returned the bok to its place on the bookshelf. But strangely, that night back in the dorm, I kept thinking about all of those beautiful and thought-provoking works of art. I believe I actually went to sleep thinking about them.

Inmates at Dooly were only allowed to visit the prison library once a week. The very next week, I again found myself at the library looking through the few books on art that were available. This time, I read about concepts and how they give ideas about an artwork. I had seen Picasso's work “Guernica” once before long ago on the front page of a New Yorker Magazine. But up until that day in the lirbary, I had never read its concept, why it was created, what it meant.

That day a light was turned on in my head. I was no longer in the dark, when it came to concepts. I even learned about collages. How the Chinese had first created them. But it was Picasso who used collages in contemporary artworks. All this information was very exciting. I never knew that art was so interesting. I can't say exactly why but I wanted to create a work of art. I wondere if I could make something nice while in prison. I wondered if I had the imagination to create. Heck, I knew how to create songs and I'd never did anything like that before prison. Why would I not be able to create an artwork? I only had time on my hands.

For a couple of weeks I drew this and that on paper. Guys would come to my room to see what I was doing. I'd ask them, what does that look like? Or, what does this remind you of? Believe me, there was more to art than what little I knew. I quickly realized that I simply did not know where to begin.

It's hard to say if I was fortunate or just lucky as all get out. But a couple of weeks after I started to draw, a new guy was moved in my dorm. The guy was obese, friendly and black. His name was Barnard Patrick. He was a prison artist. Once I found out that Patrick knew about ceating art, I made it a point to introduce myself to him. I told him that I wanted to create art one day, but knew so little.

Our prison library was limited when it came to books on the subject of art. It took time but Patrick began to see that I truly was interested in art. After a while he took a liking to me and showed me

pictures of some of the works he had created while in prison. Patrick had friends on the streets (on the outside) who sold his works for him. He actually got money for his art. I was shocked. Money for prison art? Patrick told me there were people who wanted prison art. Patrick's bit of info blew my mind. I would have never dreamed that people on the outside would want a prisoner's artwork. That was so cool to me. I could only think of how proud I'd be knowing that someone had something of mine hanging up over their fireplace or in their office. In my mind, I could just see some big shot pointing to a beautiful art work in his office while telling those gathered around, "This work of art was created at Dooly State Prison by an inmate named Dye. This artwork is so extraordinary that next week I intend on carrying it to the White House and showing the president." Of course I was only dreaming, but it was a nice dream, something that I liked. Bernard Patrick began to help me put my dream together by explaining how to create prison art. Collages were good for starters. We didn't have colored pencils at Dooly, no paints, no brushes, nor did we have anything to paint on. Only paper. But Bernard opened my eyes to the things around me. First, he explained, magazines were everywhere throughout the dorms. One can buy old magazines for a dime a dozen. Magazines have colored paper. With colored paper one can make a collage. As far as medium, toilet paper was given out every Friday. It was brought to the dorm in boxes. One could cut these empty cardboard boxes to any size and then glue colored paper onto the cardboard by using floorwax. Floorwax was also passed out weekly so inmates could wax their cell floors. Bernard told me to first try making a collage. He wanted me to get the feel of using colored paper, cardboard, floorwax and most importantly my imagination. I was nervous. I asked him once, what should I create? What kind of picture can I make with paper? Bernard's answer was direct and to the point. Without cracking a smile he said to me, "Look, you want to be an artist, then be an artist. Don't be afraid to try stuff. Paper is cheap. But, don't ask me what to create. You do your thing and I'll do mine. I can't think for both of us."

What Patrick said made sense. I had to think on my own. I had to be me, not Bernard Patrick. And so, with this bit of advice, I began to gather up things to use for my first collage. It was easy finding old magazines. Just like Bernard said, they were a dime a dozen. Most inmates would give their old magazines away just to get them out of their lockers. To make room for new ones. Floorwax was also easy to get. It was passed out every week so I was able to keep a shampoo bottle full of wax hidden in my locker without the guards knowing. Cardboard only came when toilet supplies were given to us in the dorm. Most of the time I paid an inmate two soups (sixty cents) for the empty box our supplies came in. The box would be brought to my room, I would quickly cut three of the sides off the box with a razor blade, and then give what was left of the box back to the inmate who had brought it to me. He, in turn, would throw away what was left of the box. The guards did not have a clue as to what was going on.

My first attempts at collage creating were slow, but very enjoyable. I cut all these different colors from magazines. I waxed the colored paper to the cardboard. It didn't take long to see how pretty the waxed paper was once it dried. I was so excited by the idea of finally creating something. I didn't know everything but if I did have a question Bernard was more than happy to answer it for me. In the meantime Patrick was creating his own art works. Sometimes I would walk into his room and all this cardboard and paints would be laying out on his bed to desk. I was shocked to see all these paints. I asked him where he got the paint. "I make my paint," Bernard told me with a grin. He promised to show me how to make paints, but only after I'd first made a collage or two. In other words, Bernard was now my unofficial teacher and my friend.

My first collages were what I would call easy. Sure I made mistakes but whenever this happened, I'd simply cover my mistakes with additional colored paper. I made several works in a matter of a couple of weeks: Old Man and the Bird, Back to Square One, Thinking Outside the Box, The Forbidden

Dance, and others. Barnard was really surprised and impressed by my collages. So much so that he mentioned he would tell a friend of his. Barnard knew some lady down in Miami Florida who sold prison art. Eventually I sent her a collage that I made called "Crime Scene Investigator." Barnard told me to send the work. If she liked it, he explained, then she might start selling all your works. You might even make enough money to help your mother. Being able to help my mom was top priority. At that time, I would have done anything to help my mother get out of that shed. I would have walked across hot coals if need be. But in the end I figured it wiser to try my hand at art. Besides, I was really enjoying this new found part of me. The art of creating was a wonderful thing.

The lady in Florida told Barnard that she couldn't take aboard any more prison artists. She had too many prisoners sending her art as it was. But she did give Barnard a name and an address of a place in Washington DC that might at least look at my works. The place was called Prisons Foundation and the man in charge was Dennis Sobin. And so, I had a name now. The very next day I wrote Dennis Sobin and explained my situation to him. I asked him if he would check out my art. The next day, when I dropped my letter into the mailbox, I had goosebumps. Back at the dorm I watched Barnard create some painted works. He was really good at making paints. He showed me how toothpaste, coffee creamer and floorwax made a nice white paint, blue soap and floorwax made a soft blue color. Remove the black ink from a pen, add coffee creamer and floorwax, and you'd have black paint. One could do the same with a blue pen to get blue paint. And then there was mustard and floorwax for yellow. Although Dooley did not sell colored pencils in its store, new arrivals sometimes brought colored pencils in from other prisons. Barnard would buy the colored pencils every chance he got. Later I started to do the same. I quickly learned that you could cut open a colored pencil, remove the coloring inside, and then let it melt in a small cup of floorwax. That made paint also.

Patrick was good, and his artworks were good. I noticed that after he finished with an artwork he always signed it "B. Pat" at the bottom. That was cool. As I waited to hear from Dennis Sobin at Prisons Foundation, I continued to work at making my collages better. The floorwax was good for glue. However, once the wax dried, my cardboard (medium) would always be bowed in the middle. Patrick told me to sleep with the cardboard under my mattress. I tried this but my cardboard still bowed after the wax had dried. That's when an idea hit me. The next time after I'd made a collage, I let the wax dry completely. Like before, the cardboard bowed. But this time, I placed the cardboard on the desk in my room and using the palms of my hands pressed down against the bow a few times. Gradually the cardboard became straight. I was happy with what I had done on my own.

I didn't learn everything overnight. Along with making paints, I also had to learn how to write concepts. I think that "Forbidden Dance" was one of the best concepts I had written. Even Barnard was surprised by my ability to write concepts. As I waited on a reply from Dennis one week turned into two. It was on that second week of waiting that my art friend Barnard was moved out of the dorm. I think he got caught bringing something back from the Chow Hall. Barnard went to the hole for a week. When he came out, he was placed in a dorm on the other side of the prison. After that, I hardly ever saw Barnard. Only on occasion did I see him in the library. That was our only chance to talk.

A letter from Prisons Foundation finally arrived at the end of that second week. I opened the envelope and read its contents carefully. Dennis Sobin would be pleased for me to send Prisons Foundation some of my works. I was so happy to read this. I showed everyone in my dorm the letter and told them I was going to be an artist. And this I meant.

I believe one of my first works sent to Washington was a collage called Old Man and the Bird. It was very colorful and thought-provoking. Plus, its concept was very good also. I sent a few others as well,

and made it a point to sign my works "C Dye."

It wasn't long after I began sending works to Dennis that he happened to have a show in which he displayed about 300 works. To my total surprise, one of my works sold. It was Old Man and the Bird. I received a letter from Dennis telling me this bit of news. He also said that I was one of 80 artists to have a work sold. He said I should be proud and I was. After that little pick-me-up, I began to think about art as my calling. I felt really good to know somebody in the free world had my artwork. I could only wonder if they were as proud of it as I was.

I started to make collages like I was the Collage King. Yet I also started to make and use my own mixutre of homemade paints. I tried all kinds of stuff. Coffee, coffee creamer and floorwax made an awesome brown. I used glitter off of various cards sent into the prison, Christmas Cards, Fathers Day Cards, etc... Nothing went unnoticed by my watchful eye. I did a colorful work called "Morning Blooms." It was a picture that showed three mushrooms and a beautiful blue sky in the background. This time however, I made the mushrooms out of paper napkins and floorwax. My brown color underneath the mushrooms was coffee and coffee creamer. The grass around the mushrooms was made of green colored paper taken out of a magazine, and paint for the blue sky was made with a blue ink pen, coffee creamer and floorwax. Plus, I used toothpaste to paint te mushrooms white. The work was fascinating indeed. Again I was proud of it, just like The Forbidden Dance that I was so proud of. At that time I was on a roll. I created a work called The Mouse Trap. It was a bit simple but in time it sold.

2005 finally came and with it my yearly checkup. Since I had just turned 50, the prison doctor ordered for me to have every kind of blood test that was given at that time. I assured the doctor that I was fine, but I begrudgingly took all the blood tests. I personally thought it was a waste of time and the state's money. Two weeks later I was called back to see the doctor. He informed me that I had prostate cancer, the early stages. His words went like shock waves through my body. I never would have dreamed that I Had cancer at age 50. He assured me that we had plenty of time to work with my condition. He told me not to worry. But I did. Cancer had killed my Daddy, how could I not worry?

For those first weeks after being told of my concern, I worried. I asked myself over and over, "Who's going to take care of Mama?" I prayed but not for myself. I worried about Mama.

I wrote Timbo and told him. I didn't want to call. I was afraid that I might sound like a wimp. I wrote to Dennis in Washington DC. I wrote to Mother. I eventually called mama and she believed in early detection. She believed I'd make it. I had to make it, at least until my parole date in 2009. I think that having cancer caused me to go on a mission. If I was going to die of cancer, at least I wanted to leave something behind. Like those artists of old, I would leave behind my art to the world. Although I was far from being a renowned artist, I was at least a beginner. Maybe someone would be interested I my art like they had with Old Man and the Bird. I knew that most artists were more famous when they were dead. And so, I started my legacy.

I worked on art constantly. But remember that I was enjoying myself the whole time. I cursed myself for not knowing and learning of art years before. What a way to go, I would say to myself. Find something you love and then you have to leave it. How said. I created a painting one time called Blooming Idiot. There was this short guy in a police line up holding a potted plant with one bloom. The concept read that one would have to be a blooming idiot to spend years in prison away from family and friends. The person in that artwork was me. What a blooming idiot I was, and I tried to express it in that work.

Dennis Sobin wrote to me several times giving me encouragement. He also sent newspaper clippings out of the Washington Post with me mentioned as one of his artists. If Dennis, for some reason, did not write, then one of the people working at Prisons Foundation would. I always looked forward to this.

Creating art in prison was not always easy. Sometimes the guards would come into the dorm and do a shake down. This is when they would go through your locker and stuff looking for things you were not supposed to have. On one shakedown the guards found and took several of my artworks. I tried to get them back, but the guard in charge said my art had been destroyed. Plus, we inmates were not supposed to have cardboard.

I never got those art pieces back, and I hated it. Making paint, getting one's hands on cardboard, thinking of a work to make and then writing a concept takes lots of time. In prison, art is not easy. Something to paint with was a problem also. We had no paint brushes in prison. At first I used my fingers. I used wooden ice cream spoons and I used rolled up paper. I was always looking for something better to paint with. One day it hit me. I'd make a paint brush and I did. First, I Took the eraser out of a pencil since pencils were easy to get. Then I checked out the hair on several of my friends in the dorm. A guy whose hair was long and course, was whose I used. I gave him a soup for a clipping of his hair. I then placed the hair clipping in where the pencil eraser had went and bent the tin in tight around the hair. What a great paint brush I had made. After that one, I made several more. I was all smiles after that. But, the guy who sold me hair complained that I cut too much. Sure I left behind a small bald spot, but I assured him it would all grow back in a couple of weeks. I forked over another soup and he was happy.

I mailed out so much art that stamps became a problem. And to make matters worse, I was getting in very little money because my Daddy wasn't around anymore, and Mama was struggling since the house fire. I made up for my lack of stamps and art supplies by selling my hamburger and hot dog tray. Everyone in prison enjoyed our monthly hot dog and hamburger tray. Plus, I sold my monthly fried chicken tray as well. Food meant little to me if I had to decide between it or mailing my artworks out. I'd much rather have the stamps. Some of the fellas knew I was selling my meals for stamps. Some of the guys would pay me stamps to sweep and mop out their cells each morning. Every little bit added up. Every little bit helped. This is what I had to do.

The next county over from Dooly County is Perry. Each October the Georgia Fair comes to Perry County. I was surprised one morning to get a visit from my Mother and my young brother Bret. By the way, my little brother Bret is not so little. He stands six feet tall and weighs at least a healthy 225 pounds. I hadn't seen my mother since 1993. Yet when I got to the visiting room my brother was strangely quiet. Mama talked nonstop. Bret had came and got her. He brought her to see me. Bret had his drivers license back. Mama said that before going home Bret wanted to visit the Georgia Fair. He had never been.

Mama was doing all the talking and at the same time giving me these strange eye glances from Bret to me. But, I got to the point. I asked Bret why he couldn't do more to help Mama since she was in a bad way. His reply shocked me. He said that he worked so may days a week and put in so much overtime that he couldn't do much of anything. My mother quickly changed the subject by asking about the treatment I was receiving for my prostate cancer. But I was in no mood for the subject. Again I started talking to my brother about our Mama living in a drafty plywood shed. I asked him why he could not do more. Why Myra (our sister) couldn't do more. I told him that Mama needs help. She's too old to be living like she is. Everything (all my worries, all my frustrations) came flowing out like a waterfall.

Since this was the first time I'd talked with Bret since 1993, I wanted some answers for why Mama wasn't helped by her children.

I could tell right away that my brother looked uncomfortable and quickly got angry. Instead of answering my questions, he stood up suddenly and announced that he was leaving. He ordered mMa to come with him or he'd leave her. My visit that day lasted 30 minutes, if that. Sure I was glad to see Mama. Sure I wish they would have stayed longer, but I had to ask why Mama was receiving no help, nor support, from the children that she cared for an loved so much. I did not understand why my brother would become angry because of my concerns about Mama. What was his problem, I asked myself. Or was it me?

That night I talked with Mama on the phone for a minute. She said that after Bret and she left me, Bret carried her to the Georgia Fair. She agreed that Bret could do more to help her. But she wasn't going to push him or anyone else when it came to helping her out. She didn't want to be a bother or a burden on anyone. I think Mama was afraid that someone might try placing her in an old folks house. Somewhere she never wanted to be. I accepted this but it didn't change the fact that she needed her house repaired.

In 2006 I again visited a free-world doctor in regards to my prostate cancer. He told me there was a new procedure that was being used on men with early prostate cancer. The procedure was called cryotherapy. That is where the cancer is frozen but the thawing out kills the cancer. I liked that kidea. No chemicals, nor radiation would be introduced into my body that way. I gave the go-ahead and the date for me to go into the hospital would be the latter part of 2007 or 2008 depending.

In the meantime I continued with my art. I think it was 2006 when I received a check for works that Dennis had sold. Naturally my mother got the money. I only wanted stamp moey out of the check. My art was looking good. I was using fruit punch for skin color now. I was still creating collages, but painting I really enjoyed. Like a kid in a candy store.

I had a real friend at Dooly. His name was Jerry. He worked for the staff. He was an inmate the same as me, but he could get things. One day he surprised me by giving me a real paintbrush, just like an artist would use. I was so happy. That one little brush made me feel like it was Christmas. I used it over and over. I used it so much that it finally wore out. I sure hated that. In the meantime I was trying new ideas. Now instead of painting on cardboard, I'd wax napkins to the cardboard first and let it dry. This gave my cardboard texture. I was always trying things and using anything I Could to create artworks. I wanted to be different and wanted people to know that I was for real and here (in the artworld) to stay.

I wrote Timbo from time to time. Like clockwork he always wrote back. Over and over he mentioned that I should move to Elberton when I got out. He was there and his door was always open for me. That was an idea. Timbo and I always got along. But moving to Elberton would have to be after I was off of parole. I liked the idea.

A very wonderful thing happened at the end of 2007. Hud Homes contacted my mother. Because the land that she lived on was paid for, they were going to build her a new house to live in – *free*. Again, I was so happy. After years of worrying and praying, my dear mother was finally getting out of that plywood shed. Hud started building her house in January of 2008. They were finished a month later. Mama was so thrilled and I was thrilled for her.

In 2008 I at last had my cancer treated in a free world hospital. I stayed overnight and by the next day found myself back at Dooly State Prison. The doctor had indeed put me to sleep and used the cryotherapy treatment to kill my cancer. For a couple of weeks I was slow at getting around. But eventually I heeled up pretty nicely. My follow-up visits to the doctor confirmed that my cancer was gone. I was so heppy and I thanked God over and over for the news.

Dennis sent me another check for artworks he had sold. My art was moving pretty good up in Washington DC. I was glad to get the money because April of 2009 was close at hand. April was my parole month and I found myself nervous as all get out.

All the fellas assured me I'd be going home. But I wasn't one to count my chickens befor ethey hatched. In other words, show me... It was slow and April passed with no word from the parole board. Mama said that two parole officers had come by and talked with her about me living there. Finally on June 1st I was called to my counselor's officer to sign my *parole papers*. It was so unbelievable! Yet, there was one thing that upset me, and I did not understand. The parole board was making me (forcing me) to register as a sex offender. Although I had done the time o my 1981 charge long ago, they were still making me register. Twenty seven years had passed since the Tammy thing happened. That was water under the bridge. I was confused but at that moment I needed to get out. I needed my freedom. I needed to see and be with and help my mother. I needed to visit my Daddy's grave. I needfed to do things. On June 10th, 2009 I was released from Dooly State Prison and was carried to the Macone Greyhound Bus Station. I rode the bus to Atlanta where my mother picked me up. On the bus that day I talked with a group of young people. I forgot that I was no long a young buck. Rather, I was a 53 year old ex-felon. The young people on the bus asked me questions about prison and showed me their cellphones. I felt like Rip Van Winkle. I'd never seen nor used a cellphone before. Heck, I didn't even know how to turn it on, or which end to talk into. I was so out of touch. I felt so dumb. But I was glad to be out. That meant everything to me.

When Mama picked me up we stopped and grabbed a bite to eat at Pizza Hut. Nature called while at Pizza Hut and I went to use the men's restroom. Once finished I could not flush the toilet. I pushed on and pushed on this black button over the toilet. There was no handle. Finally when I got tired of pushing on the button I turned to walk away and the darn thing flushed. The same thing happened at the sink when I washed my hands. So many things existed that I simply didn't know about. But I was ready to learn.

Riding home with Mama was so strange. First of all, I hadn't ridden in the front seat of a car in no telling how long. The morning air felt good so I kept my window down, and my eyes open. After sixteen years, I could see right away that so much had changed while I was away. Expressways, highways, and roads looked so different. So much construction had taken place that it was unreal. As we neared the house, I was also surprised by the changes in the landscape. New homes had popped up everywhere and houses that I did remember now looked old. Some even looked rundown. Most of the businesses that I remembered were gone and I wondered what had happened to the owners. For me it was a whole new world that greeted my eyes. In some cases, I was happy in other cases, I was sad. But I was not taken back – blown away – when we finally turned into Mama's driveway and I saw her new house. Not only was it a pretty house but it looked so big from the road. Later I found out that the house was only a two bedroom. But after sixteen years in a small cell, this place was a mansion. I was smiling from ear to ear. I was so happy that my old Mama had a nice place to live. I didn't have to worry anymore. From the driveway, I also spotted what looked like my Daddy's old truck parked out behind the house. Ia sked Mama if that was indeed Daddy's truck and Mama said yes. She had bought the truck from Daddy before he died. Mama had been using the old Dodge throughout the years. It

was pretty banged up but at least it ran. It was an '87 model, but I would be proud to drive it. The truck had belonged to Daddy, Mama, and now me once I got my driver's license back.

The inside of Mama's new house was neat and pretty. Mama had it fixed just the way that she wanted it. Mama had the back bedroom, I was given the front bedroom. I liked my bedroom and being able to see cars that passed by on the street. I had a room with a view, and it sure beat beat the heck out of the window view I had in prison.

I cooked dinner that night. I think we had chicken with lots of vegetables. Later, after we had eaten, Mama told me all about Hud Homes' building her house and how it came about. It was my sister Myra and her daughter Tara who had contacted Hud. Because Mama's land was paid for (Mama had 10 acres of land) Hud agreed to check out her house that had caught fire. After a quick inspection, Hud decided that the burnt house was too damaged to be repaired. They thought that building Mama a new house would be in everyone's best interest. So it was my sister who had made call after call until she got something done. Hearing that bit of news made me feel so good. I called Myra and we talked. I told her how proud that I was of her. I thanked her for a job well-done.

But good news was not always the case. There was bad news also. Although I had not yet seen my brother Bret since he and my Mama came to visit me at Dooly, I nevertheless wondered how he was doing. After all, he was my brother and I cared for him. Mama explained to me that Bret had saved up a lot of money. He had stocks and bonds. He bought a Harley Davidson motorcycle, a Mustang convertible, and a van. His motorcycle was parked inside Mama's garage. His convertible and van were parked behind her house. "So where is Bret?" I asked her. She explained that Bret was in the Douglas County Jail. He had got a DUI and he was serving a six month sentence. He had three months to go before he was released. This news of Bret floored me. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Bret never got in trouble. Bret never did anything wrong. Plus, I remember the time he brought Mama to visit me at Dooly Prison and the way he looked down on me, like I was a piece of trash for being locked up. Now the shoe was on the other foot. Now he was the one locked up. One thing I can say about Georgia, they stay on top of their game. If they can't lock you up, then nobody can.

Mama said that Bret would not have gotten any jail time had he pleaded guilty to the DUI charge. But no, Bret took it to trial. He thought his big shot lawyer could get him off clear and green. But Bret was found guilty anyway. That's why he received jail time. In Georgia, if one goes to trial and you're found guilty, then you're going to get time. But if you plead guilty and save the state time and money, then a person normally just receives a fine. I really hated to hear this news. I would make sure to go visit Bret and I did. I tried to be nice. Although he only came once during the sixteen years I was locked up, I made sure to go visit him three times. I wanted to show him that I was a better person.

That night, I stayed up past 11:30 watching television. Mama had bought a fifty inch big screen television and I didn't know what to think. I was in paradise. Mama went to bed early but around midnight I went outside and sat alone on the porch. It was a beautiful June night. The stars were out and it was so quiet. I remember saying a prayer that night. I thanked God for letting me come home to help my aging Mama. I thanked God for enabling my sister to contact Hud Homes. I asked God to keep my brother and my sister safe. I also said a prayer for all the fellas that I had left behind at Dooly. Just being able to be alone and talk to God man to man gave me goosebumps. I was so happy.

When I finally did go to bed, I could not sleep. I kept thinking about actually being free. I kept thinking about being in a real bed. I thought about Daddy. So many of my relatives had died while I

had been in prison. I thought about Timbo. I had intended on writing him before I was released, but never did. Actually, I had not written to Bo since October of 2008. that had been 8 months ago. I should have written before now. But tomorrow after I reported in with my parole officer, I'd call Bo. Bow, was he going to be tickled to hear from me. And of course I'd be tickled to talk with Bo as a free man.

I can't say what time I actually fell asleep, but you can believe that I slept great. I was free.

Mama in the living room watching early mornig news was the sound that I woke up to that first morning of freedom, not the screams of guards ordering inmates to get out of their bunks. For awhile after awakening I just laid there listening. It was like my soft bed and warm covers were holding me captive. It was still dark out and occasionally I saw a car passing by on the street outside. I could only think that this early traffic was people on their way to work. I bet it felt good. I couldn't wait until I had a job and would be going to work like the rest of the world.

Slowly I managed to drag myself out of bed. I got dressed, washed my face and brushed my teeth, all in my own bathroom. In the kitchen, I made myself a strong cup of hot coffee. Next I fixed breakfast for Mama and myself. I never dreamed that bacon, eggs, and toast could taste so good. I'd forgotten just how good the simply things in life could be. Plus, Mama enjoyed having someone cook for her. She needed the attention because the truth of the matter was Mama was slowing down, she was frail and forgetful. It made me feel good to be apart of her life again, when she needed me most.

By 7:30 that morning we departed for the parole office in College Park. We arrived early and sat in the car until the place opened. Other people were also waiting to go inside so I didn't look so out of place. That first meeting with my parole officer went okay. She was nice enough, but I was given so many hoops to jump through that it was unreal. For starters, I had to wear an ankle monitor. This was a light-weight device that was strapped to my ankle. It was never to be removed so it could be worn in the shower. This device let my parole officer know when I was or was not inside the house. I had a curfew from 6 in the morning until 6 in the evening. Next I was given something that looked like a Sony Walkman to clip onto my belt. This was some kind of GPS unit that allowed my parole officer to know my location whenever I was out of the house. I had to carry this thing on me at all times. It turned out to be a pain in the butt because a lot of times I would leave the house and not have the unit with me. Then I'd have to hurry back home just to get it – wasting time and gas. My parole officer also told me that I would have to attend a sex class in Atlanta every Saturday from 9:00 until 11:30 at \$50 a visit for two years. Yet before I could even start those classes, I had to first pay out \$400 for a psychological evaluation. All this stemming from my 1981 charge involving Tammy. I could not believe what all I had to pay out. But that wasn't all. Every six months I had to take a polygraph test at \$225 a pop. All this money going to the state had me dizzy before leaving the parole office y parole officer ordered me to do once more thing. I had to go the Fulton County Sheriff's Office in Atlanta and register as a Sex offender. This was something I'd have to do each year from that point on. I could only shake my head in disbelief. I wasn't rich, I didn't have a job, and I still didn't understand why I had to register as a sex offender. I had no molested a child. Plus, my '81 sentence had been over with long ago. That was water under the bridge in my book; 27 years ago. I felt so helpless. It was like the state of Georgia was milking me and my family for everything they could. I was sick for awhile.

Later that day, after I had returned from the parole office, I decided it was time for a little pick-me-up. I told Mama that I was calling Timbo. If she wanted to, I explained, she could speak with Ted (Timbo's dad, my father's brother). I knew that Mama had no spoken with Uncle Ted in years. Mama, Daddy and Uncle Ted (and Ted's wife Henrietta) had once been friends the way Timbo and I were.

Remembering Uncle Ted's phone number was easy. Ted had had that same number for years and years. 283-6532. I quickly punched in the numbers on Mom's cell phone and Uncle Ted answered on the second ring. I knew he was surprised to hear my voice on the other end of the line. "How ya doing Uncle Ted?" I asked in a very cheerful voice. "Fine," Uncle Ted replied without hesitation. "Where you at, Ank?"

"I'm home, Uncle Ted. I got out yesterday. I figured it was time to call y'all up and hear everyone's voice."

"Well I'm glad you did, Ank. I'm glad you did. And how's Peggy?"

"Oh, she's fine. Mama's sitting on the couch next to me. I'll let you talk with her, but could I first say hello to Bo?"

There was a long pause. When Uncle Ted spoke again I could hear pain in his words. "Ank." He paused to clear his throat. "Timbo passed away Thanksgiving day. He's not with us anymore."

"Timbo's dead?" I shouted in the receiver. "Timbo's dead?! But how? How could Timbo be dead?" My eyes filled with tears that quickly. I was breathing so heavily. This was a nightmare. No, this was worse than a nightmare. There was no way Timbo could be dead. Now I was crying.

Mama had been seated beside me and grabbed the phone from my hands. Tears were in her eyes also. "What happened, Ted? For God's sake what happened?"

I could not hear but Ted told Mama that Tim had started to drink heavily. At some point he became sick so Ted and Henrietta took him to the hospital. Tim ended up staying for a couple of weeks. The doctors said that if Tim stopped drinking he would be able to live a normal life and a long life. For awhile Tim did stop drinking. But unfortunately he started back. The drinking killed him. Ted said that there were so many people at Tim's funeral. He was liked and is missed by many. Ted also told Mama that he didn't write me when Tim died. They knew I was supposed to be getting out within a year and they knew I'd be calling Tim. Ted felt it would be better to wait for me to call. He wanted to be the one to tell me.

It was so hard for me to believe Timbo was actually dead. We had plans. Even now, years later, I think about Tim, Daddy, and friends I have lost and become saddened. Why? I ask myself. We were going to do things. Why? The hurt never goes away.

But slowly I got back on track. I got focussed and started to get my life back together. Heck, I had to. I could not let the past drag me down. First I went to Atlanta and registered at the Fulton County Sheriff's Office as a sex offender. I was so embarrassed but after seeing all the other people who were registering I didn't feel as bad. Next I went to Atlanta again and had the psychological evaluation. That was the only way I would remain free. I sure hated to hand over the \$400 to those blood-suckers. I knew the Parole Board was getting a kickback. That's how they do things. It's all about money. I also started going to a \$50-a-week class every Saturday. Mama gave me the \$400 and the \$50 each week but it was really eating into her monthly check. I felt bad about how the State of Georgia was getting over on people coming out of prison. But what could I do? Those fat cats at the Board were loving it, I'm sure.

It wasn't long after I was out that I called Dennis Sobin at Safe Streets Art Foundation in Washington

DC. It was my first time speaking with Dennis and hearing his voice. I told him about getting out and how nervous I was. I told him about all the money the State of Georgia was milking me for. We talked about art. I enjoyed my time on the phone with Dennis. He was nice and told me to call back anytime. I knew that I would.

Working around the house kept me pretty busy those first weeks out. Plus, when I wasn't working at home I was out looking for a job. Weeks turned into months and I was glad Mama had such a big place. Ten acres is a lot of land. She has a barn and several out-buildings and they all needed some work of some kind. I got my driver's license after a month or so. Now being able to drive enabled me to get more done. First I tuned up the truck, changed the oil and transmission fluid. Next I did the same to Mama's car. It was great being able to go places and see all the changes that had taken place while I was away. I visited stores and shops but knew no one. I was a total stranger to all those I met. It was weird to be the stranger in town. One day I had been gone for several hours. I had been looking for parts for Daddy's old truck. I liked that old Dodge. Everytime I got behind the wheel I thought of Daddy. Well, one day I had been gone and when I came home my brother Bret greeted me at the front door. He had finally did his time and was released from the Douglas County Jail. Actually he was released a couple of weeks early for good behavior. That is why no one had expected him. Bret was so glad to be out. Mama was happy to see him and I was also happy that he was out. That is when Mama explained to me that Bret would be staying with us until he got his driver's license back. When he went to jail for those six months he had lost his apartment. That is why all of his things were over at the house. Mama said that just as soon as Bret got his license back and paid his fines he would be gone. I personally did not know how long all this would take, but I did know that it would be a little crowded with him there. Plus, my brother is not the easiest person to live around. He's a big guy at six foot one. He is also heavy at 225 pounds. He is loud. He has a very loud voice. Even if one is seated across from him, Bret seems to be yelling when he talks. And he has a temper. You don't talk back to him or he wants to fight. Or, that's how he used to be. Maybe time had changed him. Either way, I knew that things would be okay. I'd lived sixteen years in prison with guys who were way worse than Bret Dye. I could deal with him. I had to deal with him. I had no choice.

For a while things seemed to be going good around the house. Bret slept on the couch and watched a lot of television. I didn't mind cleaning up after hi either. Mama and I both knew Bret had always been a little bit on the lazy side when it came to house cleaning. I guess a lot of guys are. But I didn't mind. I liked to stay busy. I worked in the yards. I fixed things. I cleaned the gutters and fixed Mama's garage door. Somehow or another it had come off track while I was in prison. Plus while all this was going on, I still went out looking for a job. There was always something for me to do.

I think 2 or 3 months had gone by when I started noticing a change in my brother. Maybe Bret had cabin fever or maybe he simply did not like me being around. After all, I was doing things around the house and making improvements. Either way, Bret started to say things (little things at first) that I picked up on. He would be in the kitchen with mama and I'd hear him say, "Anthony needs to find a job," or, "why doesn't he look for a job?"

Heck, I would have loved to have had a job with a real pay check and coworker friends. I didn't know anyone. The only friends I had made were with Mama's two dogs, her two cats, and the several emus and pot-belly pigs that she kept for pets. And I almost forgot about the peacock and goat. All were cute and loveable. Her animals quickly took a liking to me. I guess because I showed them so much attention.

Meanwhile, my brother's mouth kept running. But now, he would say things while I was in the same

room. He was not drinking at first, but now he drank every day. And whenever he drank he would always – like clockwork – start to brag about all the money he had in the bank. He would brag about his stocks. He would brag about his motorcycle, his Mustang, his van, his place in Florida (he owns a house right outside Panama City). Brag. Brag. Brag. I got so tired of hearing him. And what made it so bad was he would not shut up. I tried to deal with it. I'll have to give Bret credit, he was helping Mama with her bills. I brought on a lot of her bills, but when I got a job I intended to repay her in full the money she'd spent on me. And don't think that I did not feel bad by using my poor old Mama's money. I laid in bad many nights thinking about the burden I had put on her. It was like, “way to go Anthony, for being a pain in everyone's butt.”

In the meantime my brother's temper had gotten worse and at times he was acting a fool. Not only that, he was always saying things about me not having a job. In his eyes no matter what I did, what I fixed, or how hard I looked for a job, I was lazy as all get-out. Bret was putting crap in Mama's head. Mama's old, Bret was paying her bills, and she is listening as Bret plants his seeds of lies in her head. I knew that I had to do something.

I had been out for only six months and since I could not find a job maybe I could create some works of art for Dennis to sell at Safe Streets Art Foundation. In the past Dennis had sold many of my works. It certainly could not hurt to try. That very next day I happened to find a large cardboard box in one of Mama's storage buildings. I cut the box up into four large pieces. These four pieces would give me a medium to create art on. I had things around the house to use for my art, colored pencils that I brought from prison, coffee, coffee creamer, toothpaste and there were other things I thought would be interesting to use. It took time, but slowly I began to create art again. And it felt so good to be doing something that I really enjoyed.

Of course my brother did not understand my abstract artworks. He thought I was wasting my time when I could have been out looking for a job. And he told me this on several occasions. He would always say these things in front of Mama. Or he would say things loud enough for Mama to hear. It was like, I was the bad guy. But, I wasn't the bad guy. I wanted to work and pay back Mama. Heck, I love Mama. I love all my family. But they simply did not understand or failed to realize that jobs were in very short supply in 2009. I guess the breaking point came about one night after Bret had been drinking heavily. I didn't drink or use drugs (it would have been against parole for me to do either and I would easily go back to prison if I did). That night Bret started calling me names. He kept on and on. Finally having heard enough, I went outside and slept in Daddy's old truck. It was so cold that December night. I think it was the 27th. I had to keep cranking the truck in order to stay warm. I worried. What would my parole officer say once she found out I was not sleeping inside the house, like I was supposed to be. Would she send me back to prison? That night I prayed a lot. I was wishing that maybe Daddy was somehow in the truck with me that night. Maybe he would look over me. I finally slept but it was by no means a restful sleep.

Early that next morning I climbed out of the cold truck and went back inside the house. Like always, Bret was asleep on the couch and never heard me come in. I decided to make myself a little breakfast. Maybe Mama would join me and I could tell her how Bret had been showing his ass lately, especially after he'd been drinking. It was while in the kitchen I noticed that all my new artworks were missing from the back porch. A short time later I found them laying in the back yard. All were destroyed. I was so angry. I was upset and shaking. Without going back inside, I got into the truck and drove.

A month or so earlier I had met a guy named Mike. He had had a car sitting in his yard with a for-sale sign on it. I stopped to ask about the car and we talked. I told Mike that I had recently got out of

prison. Mike told me that his son had once did some time. I mentioned that I also created art while in prison. That's when Mike invited me into his house and showed me several paintings that he had done. For a time Mike and I talked about art. He was a cool guy. I had a new friend now and from time to time I stopped by his house to talk or to just say hello. Mike was a good matured guy.

And so, as I drove around that morning thinking about Bret and my destroyed artworks I eventually found myself over at Mike's house. It was on a Saturday and Mike was at home. After being invited inside, I told Mike what had happened the night before, about sleeping in a cold truck and my artworks in the back yard destroyed. I was so upset as I spoke. I was shaking. I showed Mike how my hands were shaking my holding them out in front of me. I guess you could say I was trembling. And a nervous wreck. That's when Mike said, "I'll be right back." he disappeared in the kitchen. A few minutes later he returned with two glasses of hwat looked like liquor. I thanked Mike but told him that I didn't drink anymore, especially liquor. Mike assured me the drinks were not liquor. They turned out to be wine. I quickly downed a glass. Not only did I enjoy the sweet taste of wine, but (like Mike said) it settled my nerves a lot. The wine was so good that Mike brought me another glass, which I quickly downed. I hung around talking with Mike and his teenaged daughter for a while. I guess Mike and my's talking had woken her up. Finally after a while I announced that I was going home. Enough was enough and I intended to confront Bret and find out what his problem or problems were. And so I left. It was while driving home that I noticed that "my" old truck was running a little hot. It had a small hole in the radiator. I had to put water in it from time to time. I did not want the truck to run hot on me. I always tried to take care of Daddy's truck. So I pulled over on the side of the road (actually I was completely off the road) to put water in the radiator. I carried a jug of water in the back. I brought it along for times like this. I opened the truck's hood and carefully poured in the water. Yet once I closed the hood I saw that a police car had pulle din behind me. The police officer got out and asked if anything was wrong. The whole time he was looking my truck over inside and out. I tried to assure him that everything was fine. That's when he spotted several aluminum beer cans in the truck. I explained that I saved aluminum and picked up all aluminum cans. I also pointed out that there were coke cans inside the truck as well.

That's when the officer asked if I had had anything to drink that morning. For a moment I froze. I knew I had drank two glasses of wine with Mike. I didn't want to lie. So I told the truth. "Yes, I had two glasses of wine earlier," I explained. "I am far from being intoxicated though."

The police officer called in on me. After learning that I was on parole, he quickly gave me a balloon test while calling for backup.

I barely failed the balloon test, but I failed nevertheless. If I had eaten breakfast instead of leaving the house upset and on an empty stomach, chances are I would have passed the test. I was arrested and my truck was impounded. I was snakebit. My parole officer quickly found out about my arrest and called Mama. I also tired to call mama from the mail (the first chance I got) but she would not take my calls. I'm sure she was mad at me. The truck was impounded and that would cost money she did not have to get it out. I know Bret was really enjoying this. As I sat in my jail cell I could just see Bret at home telling Mama what a piece of trash I was. I knew Mama was listening to every word Bret said. Since Mama would not take my calls, I tried to write her. She never answered my letters. Later, I found out that Mama's phone number had been changed. I wondered what part Bret played in that. I was so upset. I didn't know what to do.

Several days later my parole officer came to see me. I was informed that Mama and my brother did not want me back at their house and that my parole was a thing of the past. I would be going back to

prison. A month or so later my parole officer paid me another visit. This time to inform me that I could get back out but I had to have another address. There is no way to describe how I felt. First of all, Mama had given up on me. And second, even if I could get back out, I had no address. I didn't know anyone. I only had one friend and I didn't know his phone number, nor his street address. I was so powerless. And so I sat, and sat, and sat. I stayed in jail for ten months while waiting to go back to prison. Mentally I had given up. My weight dropped from 163 to 141. I was so sick inside. I simply did not care anymore. I now believed that Bret was right. I was trash. I was first arrested on December 28, 2009. finally on December 1st of 2010 I left jail and was transported to Jackson Diagnostic Prison to take various tests. These were those same tests I had taken back in 1981 and 1993, when I had went through Jackson. Everyone in Georgia who is sent to prison has to go through Jackson to be tested and to have their head shaved.

I was lucky in one respect. Since the Georgia prison system was overcrowded, I didn't stay at Jackson long. On December 10th of 2010 (9 days after arriving at Jackson) I was sent south to Calhoun State Prison in Morgan, Georgia. As it turned out, Calhoun is the bottom of the barrel as far as prisons are concerned. The guards and staff are incredibly rude and dumb. I heard once that the only requirement for getting a job in a Georgia Prison was to be able to count to twenty without taking your shoes off. I can believe that. What the heck, it didn't matter how rude or how nasty-talking the guards were. I had given up. I didn't give a damn anymore. Life was a joke and I was nothing more than a short little clown. I hated myself and everyone else I could think of. I was totally alone. I wrote Mama several more times but she refused to answer. I couldn't say for certain that she was getting my mail. I guess the only thing that I knew for certain was I would ma out my twenty year sentence on April 5th of 2013. And I knew I would be doing my time (one day at a time) until I got out. But what then? Would I live under a bridge? Would I live in a shelter for men? Maybe I could move out of Georgia, but where? I had so much on my mind. And what made it so bad was, nothing looked good. Even when I got out, I had no one. And so, I started to pray . But after a while, I began to think this was a waste of time. God was probably up there looking down on me while thinking, "this Dye fella is a joke. He makes me laugh, so I'll kep him right where he is." Or, that's how I felt. Helpless.

For months after being sent to Calhoun, I would relive that day I was arrested fro DUI. Why had I pulled over on the side of the road to put water in my truck? Why didn't I just keep driving until I came upon a gas station or store? Why had I drank those two glasses of wine with Mike? What a dummy I was to do that. And then I would remember that I had been a nervous wreck that morning. That is why Mike offered me the wine to begin with. I would think about these things for a while but my thoughts always returned to Mama. I missed her and prayed that she was okay. I had no way of knowing one way or the other. To me 2010 was such a bad year. I was so down and out that it was not funny.

But then something happened that turned my life around. Something happened that gave me hope. When 2011 rolled around I signed up for an was placed in the Faith Based Dorm at Calhoun. This is a dorm where guys can take a year and a half to study about various religions throughout the world and also learn about ourselves. This is a dorm for guys who are sick and tired of being sick and tired. This is a dorm for guys who want to get out of prison and stay out of prison. The guys in the Faith Based Dorm do not just sit around praying. No, this dorm offers many classes – self-help classes that are taught by other inmates in the dorm. In Faith Based, all the guys are wanting a change and that was me all day long. I wanted a change. I wanted to get out and stay out. I wanted to be a normal person again, if that was possible. I had suffered enough. And so I became an active member in Faith Based. I started attending some of the many classes that were offered, like Goal Setting, Business Management, Arts and Crafts, etc. There were so many classes and I enjoyed them all. The classes were all about self help and that is what I wanted. Slowly I began to feel good about myself again. It

had been a while since that had happened. Plus, learning stories about other guys in the program and what they were facing once they got out made me feel better. I quickly realized that I wasn't the only one going through some hard times. Now, I began to accept that I was alone in the world and that is simply how it was going to be. I had to be strong and deal with it. I would learn all I could through self help classes, get out, and take one day at a time. I would put my best foot forward. I felt as if I could make it.

To my surprise, in early November 2011 I received a card from Dennis Sobin at the Safe Street Arts Foundation. The card was only a note, but it was great hearing from my friend. I had so few. I wondered how he knew I was in prison. His card answered all my questions. It read:

November 7, 2011

Dear Anthony,

I hadn't heard from you in a while but was told by a Washington Post reporter that you might be back inside. (I made three trips back inside after my release.) The reporter is doing a story about us and has seen your great work, which really impressed her. Drop me a line and let me know how you're doing. I'm glad you're safe. Please know how much we like and care about you.

Best,

Dennis

I read Dennis's card several times. What caught my eye was that last sentence, "Please know how much we like and care about you." That sure made me feel good but Dennis did not know me – the real me, the drunk, the loser. Still Dennis had always been a friend and if ever I needed a friend it was now. I wanted to write Dennis and tell him what I had gone through since we last talked on the phone in 2009. That very next day I wrote Dennis. I told him how I had got locked up for DUI. I told him about my brother moving in at Mama's and his bullying. I told Dennis everything. And believe me, it was so good to have a friend in my corner. I borrowed a stamp and mailed my letter. I was happy that Dennis had written. I could only hope and pray that he would write back. After all, I told him things that Dennis might not want to hear about. Now I could only wait.

Dennis sent another card dated November 19, 2011. He wrote that he understood the problems I was having and asked could he send me his book, "From Prison to the Kennedy Center," and another book called, "The Genius." Naturally I wrote back telling Dennis to send the books. After reading what Dennis had lived through for ten years, I felt better about myself. In some ways I knew a lot more about Dennis than I ever had. He had served time in prison and because he had dared to speak out against the courts (and the way things were done in our court system) he spent more time in prison than one person normally would have with the same charge. Dennis had balls. He was a fighter and he would go to bat for you. I liked that. Now I wanted to create art again. If Dennis could be a winner after serving time in prison, then I could too.

It took time but I eventually rounded up things I would need to create an artwork. My first artwork since the time Bret destroyed those I had made at home. Calhoun State Prison is tight and nothing comes free. I had cardboard off the backs of writing tablets, mustard from the chow hall, fruit punch I got from another inmate for sweeping and mopping his cell, coffee and coffee creamer I got the same by (by working for it). And then once I had the things needed to create, I still had to decide on what to

create. And so, with that in mind, I made a painting of a face consumed by flames and by pain. This was the inner me, for I was consumed by guilt, hurt, pain, and regret. The title and the concept were easy. I called it "Consumed" and when I wrote the concept I was actually speaking of myself. I was so proud of that work. So very proud. Inside it felt good to be doing something again. And I owed it all to Dennis who encouraged me with those words written in his first card. These were words I'll never forget: "We like and care about you." In a way, these were the same kind of words that Timbo would have said. I mailed Dennis my work and on December 7, 2011 I received another card from Dennis which read:

Dear Anthony,

Your new art piece is wonderful. I looked at it before reading who it was from. I said, y God, this is terrific. Then I saw it was from you, and I cried.

Best,

Dennis.

The card Dennis sent gave me plenty of encouragement and hope. After that I did other words like, "Too Cool Joe," "Pending Doom," "Unconditional," "Happy Blue," "Inticed," etc. I was on a creative roll and I think Dennis was happy with the works that I was sending him. Whenever I wasn't working on art, then I was doing odd jobs in order to earn stamps. Sometimes it has taken me up to sixteen stamps to mail off a package of four art pieces. Something I even had to sell my food to get those needed stamps. Without stamps I would be stuck like chuck. I never mentioned to Dennis that stamps were hard for me to get. Even getting my hands on colored pencils cost me. Sometimes I would buy one at a time. That was the only way I could afford them.

Dennis continued to write and I even got to talk with him on the phone from time to time. I could feel our friendship growing. Slowly I opened up to Dennis. I told him once I was released I'd have the clothes on my back, a twenty-five dollar Debit Card, and no place to go. I told Dennis about the things that worried me and he understood. Actually Dennis had been in the same boat as I, when he got out of prison. He listened and he made suggestions. He always made sense.

As I continued to create artworks, more and more of the guys in the Faith Based Program began to take notice. Some of the guys actually looked forward to seeing what kind of work I created next. Some liked my art so well that they started helping me with stamps to mail my art pieces out. It was great. Of course I still had to be careful. The guards at Calhoun would without a thought take carboard, mustard, floor wax, or anything else they would find in a person's locker that wasn't supposed to be there. For a time I painted with wood ice-cream sticks. Like a caveman who would take a stick, chew the end, and then paint with it. I was kinda like a caveman. I made art with everything I could get my hands on – string, paper clips, yarn, napkins, paint chips peeled from my cell wall. I was real lucky. Once day in early 2012 a friend of mind in Faith Based who worked up front with the staff as a helper brought me back a small paint brush. James Starling was a true friend. Had he gotten caught with that brush he would have went to the hole. I will always keep that brush. I use it even now. James took a chance for me.

Some wonderful things happened in early 2012 that I think are worth mentioning. First the prison chaplain came to see me and asked if I would teach the arts and crafts class. I jumped at the chance. Not only did I like arts and crafts, but I would now be able to get my hands on a few art materials like

glue, poster board, colored pencils, etc. This would help me. Plus, by being the art teacher, I could not only talk about art but I could show my art and let the guys hear my concepts for each piece. That would be exciting and fun.

Another thing that happened in 2012 was a lady who I did not even know wrote me from England. She had seen some of my works on the internet at the www.safestreetsarts.org website. Mrs. Rosemary Ashton wrote me simply to give me her support. I wrote her back and to this day we are friends. She likes to talk about art as much as I do. However, Mrs. Ashton went to college to learn art. I feel lucky to have her as a friend and teacher. I hope she feels the same way.

Also in 2012 around June, Dennis offered me a part time job working with him in Washington DC. This would be at the Safe Streets Gallery. Although I still have eight months left before I'm released, I am nevertheless very excited and nervous about the job. Sure I'd like to work with Dennis. However, I've never been to Washington, much less lived there.

On some nights I lay in my bunk wondering what the future has in store for me. Although I live in prison as of now, I still feel blessed to have the few friends that I do. There are many at Safe Streets who support me. It's hard to know a lot of these people. But Dennis assures me that they are there with him. And I believe and trust Dennis. I can't wait to meet these individuals and shake their hands.

Dennis will have an art show once I'm released from prison. A lot of my works and I will be at this event. I'll be the short guy with a big smile on my face. I'll be nervous but you'll never know 'cause I'm going to be strong like that old soldier who guards Elberton's Town Square. I hope that many people come to the showing.

A strange thing happened to me several nights before I finished this writing. I had went to bed early one night, fallen quickly to sleep and began to dream. In my dream, I was sitting alone in a grassy field beside my grandparents' house, Mama Dye and Papa Charlie. It was a bright beautiful day and I sat taking in all the warmth and the colors of summer. Then, from out of nowhere I was tackled from behind and ended up on my side in the grass. The person who had tackled me was none other than Timbo. But what made it all so weird was that Timbo looked to be 14 or 15 years old. That was impossible because I was 57 and Timbo was the same age as me. That's when I realized that I was also 14 or 15 years old. But how could that be? I knew better. I knew that I was older. That's when I also realized that I was dreaming. But it all seemed so real. After being tackled from behind, I tried to push Timbo off of me as we wrestled in the grass for a minute. Timbo was bigger than me so I didn't have much of a chance against Bo. Once I had sat back up, Timbo sat in the grass next to me. He was smiling that same big smile of his. He looked good and I was happy because Timbo wasn't really dead. There were so many questions that I wanted to ask him. Yet because I had the chance, Timbo said to me, "I love you Ank." I looked into Timbo's eyes. He was still smiling. My eyes filled with tears and I replied, "I love you too, Bo." And just like that, I woke up. Tears were still in my eyes and I knew that beyond any doubt I had seen Timbo, my first cousin, and best friend for the last time. Thank you God for that brief visit we had together. It was such a wonderful thing.

I still write to my mother from time to time and on her birthday and on Mother's day. I have yet to receive a reply. I will continue to write but I expect no answer. Maybe there will come a time when my mother can forgive my past. If she lives long enough. But in the meantime, I'll live for the future and will try to enjoy my remaining years as a free man and artist.

I can only hope that time will be my friend and not my rival. I intend to create artworks that people

will enjoy long after I'm no longer around. That would be so cool, to be remembered as an artist and not an inmate.

And one last thing before I end this. Thank you, Dennis. Without you, I would have given up a long time ago. You make dreams happen. I'll never forget you.

C. Dye

(That is how I sign my artworks.)