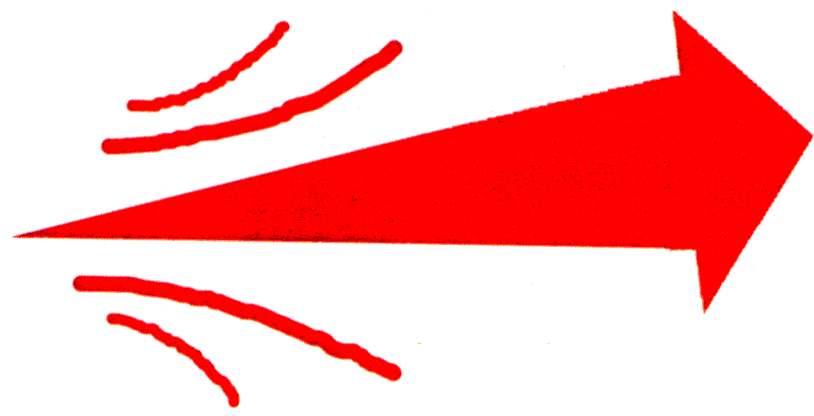


**HEADLONG  
THROUGH  
LIFE**



**DICK C.**

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HEADLONG THROUGH LIFE

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HEADLONG

THROUGH

LIFE

A TRAGIC REAL LIFE STORY

DICK C

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## FOREWARD

What follows is my story to the best of my recollection. It covers the period of time from the point of my recollection, about four years of age until February 6, 1985 which is my sobriety date. It is not intended to elicit sympathy. It is simply my story relating to my daily struggle into the long degrading road of alcoholism.

My only intention is to share my "Experience Strength and Hope" for those that may be struggling with recovery or for those who have perhaps not arrived yet.

If in your lifetime, if you have reached utter despair, my story will help you understand your own story. It is my opinion that a full recovery cannot be achieved until you are capable of those understandings.

As of this writing I have been blessed by the God of my understanding with a daily inner peace and personal happiness. As Clancy puts it, "The wind no longer blows through the hole in me"

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE BEGINNING

My name is Dick C. I am the youngest sibling in the family. I have a brother five years my senior. Through the Grace of God and my daily Twelve Step Program I have not found it necessary to take a drink since February 6, 1985. For that I am truly grateful.

My journey has allowed me to discover how the disease of alcoholism has run rampant throughout both sides of my family tree. As I began to understand these facts, I slowly began to discover how I arrived where I did. It is important in this process to fully understand that nobody made a conscious decision to become an alcoholic.

If you are to understand where I wound up, you must know where I began. For me this has been a process of discovery rather than an event. Each discovery is accompanied with some measure of pain. I had to learn to disconnect from the shame that much of this brought to the surface. It has been a slow methodical process that has required my daily effort.

My father's family came from Union County Tennessee. In 1898 they migrated in a wagon to the Southwest corner of Missouri. They acquired a Quarter Section of land in the Federal Land Grant Program. The farm as it was called was typical of the area and mostly rocks with a little dirt.

## CHAPTER 2

### 1939-Richard Arrives

It is important that we accurately set the stage for the next chapter. My father a chronic alcoholic has met my mother a classic ACOA and they are marrying to have a family. Here come the victims!!!!

My mother and father were married in 1932. In 1934 my brother was born and in 1939 I arrived. My point of recollection picks up when I am about 4 years old. I can remember specific happenings at that age.

1939 was probably not a good year to be born. The world was about to enter into World War II. By the time I am 4 years old it is 1943 and the country is at war. I can tell you that my life began with a bang and ran full force for many many years.

At this time my Grandfather dies of a mysterious illness. It is my father's belief that his stepmother has poisoned his father. They never knew why my Grandfather died, he just did.

His stepmother now takes control of the "Farm" and everybody is kicked off, or out. This is a festering family issue that goes on for years.

Do you remember Marvin my father's half brother? Well he comes to St. Louis to visit his ex-wife and son. He stayed with us. He went to visit with his wife but she would not let him in.

## CHAPTER 3

### High School

There were so many life influencing things that happened in High School that I have concluded it must have its own Chapter.

I enter Ferguson High School as a Freshman. I am not scared but I am aware. This was a trait that I had developed without knowing it. To always be aware of what was going on around me. Gee, I certainly do not think that had anything to do with my home environment do you???

One of my first discoveries in High School was how popular my brother was. He was well known and well liked.

You must understand that my brother was the opposite of me. He was very reserved, almost wounded, had a sense of humor, and got along with everyone. I was very proud to know that my brother was so well liked.

Almost on the day of my arrival the football coach approached me. He wanted to know if I ever played football. Remember there was no such thing as a Little League. Thus if you played it was Sand Lot. That is all there was. I had played enough of that to reply yes. He said, "Why don't you come out for the team". I replied that I would and I did.

## CHAPTER 4

### Reality Sets In

The following June I marry the girl that I had been going with in High School.

My mother and father are livid over the marriage. Her parents are not very happy as well.

It is time for me to now become responsible not only for myself, but for a wife, and soon to be child. I did not know at the time how unprepared I was for the job I was to undertake. Make no mistake, I did not slow down in my drinking. I continued to maintain a steady pace. My first responsibility was to find employment.

A few of my friends from High School had told me about McDonnell Aircraft, later known as McDonnell Douglas. If you were a recent graduate you could go and apply for a job. If you met the criteria, they sent you to school and then to the plant to work. I went to MAC and applied.

They gave me all of the testing. There were three areas they were trying to fill. ME&R, Mechanic Electronic & Radio, MHD, Mechanic Hydraulic, and SMAR, Sheet Metal and Rivet. At the completion of the testing they offered me a job as a ME&R. I need to put this in perspective.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Entrepreneur

During my five years of working second shift I had developed several “Hangouts”. If you were a serious drinker you want to hang out in a Tavern that would “Crowd” the closing hours. This was pretty easily done. As the law in St. Louis said, “You cannot serve anymore drinks after the closing hour, but the clients, could finish what they had”. Generally speaking if you had a cooperative Barkeep, you could squeeze another hour out it. That is important. That is about three more drinks.

One of my regular haunts was owned by a woman. I had been hanging out there for several years.

Have you ever heard the joke about the perfect girl friend? In the joke the guy meets a Deaf Mute who is a nymphomaniac and who owns a liquor store. Well the lady that owned this Tavern was not a Deaf Mute. My apologies to the ladies. No offense intended. It is just my story.

She had told me that if I decided to go into business for myself she would back the venture. Well a big shot like me could not pass that up. I decided to open my own Service Station. It did not matter that I had absolutely no business experience. I would do what I always did. I would get by on my intellect and resilience.

## CHAPTER 6

### *A New Career*

*Coming off the experience of the Service Station my life was pretty much in shambles at the moment. The booze had a good grip on me and I needed to get organized with something. I did the only thing I knew how to do pretty well by now. I began to look for a job.*

*It was not very long at all until I found a Blind Ad in the Sunday paper that I found interesting. A longstanding Missouri company had an ad in the paper for a Control Tester. That sounded good to me. I put together a Resume and sent it in. I was already becoming concerned about the number of jobs I had held so I "Polished" the Resume.*

*It was not very long at all until I received an answer to the Resume. I was asked to contact the V.P. of Human Relations and I did. We chatted briefly and he asked me to come in for some "Testing". Great!! If they are testing there is no problem here. This is also when I found out who and what the company actually was. They were a Cement Manufacturing Company that had been in business since 1898.*

*On the appointed day of interviewing and testing I did not drink before I went in.*

## CHAPTER 7

### My Children

I have purposefully chosen to wait to write about my children until this point. This is the point and time that all three of my children have arrived.

As I begin I must tell you that this is a very painful Chapter for me. While I am anxious to tell this part of the story it causes me much pain.

One of the very secret and special promises that I had made to myself was that if I ever had children it would be different. They would never ever be raised like I was and would never ever be required to go through the perceived horrors that I had.

I had always said that my children were going to be raised and have it much better than I had. I do not think that promise is uncommon to most parents.

I can tell you that my children did have it much better than I ever did as this relates to material things. As they grew up they never wanted for clothes, food, toys, or any other of the material things associated with raising children.

Emotionally, it was a tragedy. While it is not an excuse, I now know that I had no frame of reference from my own experiences to begin to raise a child. I loved all of my children immensely. They were all special to me. They were the joy of my life.

## CHAPTER 8

### Cement Company Two

Prior to Chapter 7 and the discussion of my children, I was about to quit another job. We return to that time.

It had turned gray for me and I had become restless another time. I felt I needed to change jobs again. I recognize now that these were miniature geography changes. I did not know that then.

There was a local company that was building a new cement plant just South of St. Louis. This was another old guard company.

They were in the natural gas business. They owned transport lines from Texas and sold gas anyplace the lines passed through. This included St. Louis. In addition they sold natural gas to industries. These would include steel mills, glass manufacturing, and other manufacturing operations including cement. The cement company I had started with was one of their customers.

This was a very well known prestigious company that made lots of money. Everything they did, owned, or employed, was top of the board first class. This included buildings, plants, vehicles, and employees.

To give you an example they had just bought a major railroad.

## CHAPTER 9

### Cement Company Three

There was yet another company about to build a new cement plant in the St. Louis area. This company was the largest cement manufacturer in the world. They were European owned and controlled. I was about to receive a lesson in life.

If you are wondering why these cement companies were choosing this area to build these plants, let me explain. There were two requirements to facilitate these business decisions. First you needed the required natural resource, limestone. This area along the Mississippi has some of the finest most plentiful limestone in the world.

The next thing you would need is the ability to transport via the river using barges. You had the Mississippi River running north to south. You had the Missouri River running west. You had the Ohio River running east. In short you had everything you needed.

The new company was strictly of European mentality by action word and deed. They not only told you they were superior, they believed it. They had built one cement plant in the US already. It was located in Michigan. The arrogance that permeated the company was stifling and offensive.

CHAPTER 10

Warson "66"

My life was about to take a strange turn. I was unaware of this. One of my "Credos" was "Pay Back Is A Bitch". Soon, I was about to experience that first hand.

I had remained close to a few of my friends from High School. My closes friend was Bill. He and I shared the same sense of humor and had many things in common. He and his wife had become the God Parents of my daughter. We did not necessarily see one another on a regular basis but we did talk on the telephone a lot. No matter where I worked we always stayed in communication. As I reflect back on our long term relationship the most common bond that we had was our mothers.

The parallels between the behaviors of the two mothers was remarkably similar. He and I often discussed these issues.

Bill's family was in the retail oil business. At that time they owned forty two service stations in the St. Louis area. The company had continued to grow and the family worked in the business. Bill was the oldest child and had been involved in the business the longest. Through Bill I had become acquainted with his father. He was a very fine gentleman always professional and well thought of. I admired Bill's father.

## CHAPTER 11

### The Gold Coast of Florida

I was trying to deal with the pain of my most recent discoveries. As I look back I was not doing a good job of it at all. I was driven by two things. I had to somehow finish the job of raising my children and I had to immediately deal with making a living.

I had accumulated some toys during the Warson 66 era. The convertible, a Town Car, a Station Wagon, and a Motorcycle. Many of these were extensions of my overblown ego. The Convertible you know about. The Motorcycle was the first Honda CB-750 sold in the St. Louis area. For its time it was a monster machine that could not be matched.

I sold all the toys except the motorcycle. I then sold my house. The house was my pride and joy. It was in one of the nicest areas, was on a corner lot, had a deadend street that backed up to a large church property. I just loved that home. The two boys had lots of nice friends and attended some of the better schools.

We had been to visit my parents a couple times in Florida and were familiar with the area. It was a very nice area on the Gold Coast of Florida. It was a small city of about thirty five thousand citizens mostly retirees.

## CHAPTER 12

### Return To The Scene

I had now made the decision to leave Florida. My closet drinking has become an obsession. My internal pain is constant and never subsides. I am doing the only thing I know to do. I am consuming more alcohol. It seems to take a lot more than it did.

The first issue for me was employment. I needed to resolve this matter first. I was experienced at doing this. All I needed to do is reverse the process that I had used to come to Florida. I was about to make my second major geography change.

It would not be possible for me to ride the motorcycle back to St. Louis. I had been forced to sell it

I had always made a promise to myself that if I ever started riding the bike drunk that I would get rid of it.

One night I was riding the bike drunk. I had gone to sleep on the way home. When I woke up I was in the ditch going about 70 miles per hour. The ditch was full of tall horse weeds. The weeds saved me. They prevented the bike from turning over, they held me upright. Other than some scratches on my face from the weeds I was unhurt. I rode the bike out of the ditch and made it home. I never rode the bike again.

## CHAPTER 13

### A New Career

One of my responsibilities at the cement plant was the selection and administration of outside contractors. These would be used for various projects that could not be accomplished with the in house labor force. I had used one of these contractors many times. The only reason for this was their performance.

The President of the company was a very fine man. He had risen from the ranks of the hourly forces to become the President of this company. He was not an educated man in that sense but he was extremely smart and through his work experiences was world wise.

His management style was very similar to the General Manager of the cement company that had been my mentor. He liked performance and recognized individuals that were capable of achieving these goals.

I had used them on several projects. They had no cement plant experience thus they had to rely on me and my direction. Basically I was directing their work forces and telling, if not showing them, what they needed to do. This had gained me some recognition with his company almost without my knowledge.

## CHAPTER 14

### The Death of My Parents

After my departure from the cement company and during my employment with the contractor, my father was diagnosed with lung cancer. His condition was severe and required an immediate operation for the removal of two thirds of his right lung.

As one of the Hay Stack kids he had began smoking at a very early age. This was not uncommon at all in the rural areas. He had begun on Bull Durm roll your own cigarettes. To my recollection he had smoked heavily all of his life. This mounted to two to three packs per day.

Prior to this diagnosis both my brother and myself had been estranged from both of our parents. We may have talked to them on limited occasion but really had not interacted with them with any frequency. Both of us, out of quiet self defense, had basically defended ourselves by staying away from them. This seemed to be the choice that they wanted.

My brother was contacted first by my mother about my fathers condition. He was living in California at the time. He went to stay with my mother. Shortly thereafter my mother contacted me and advised me of the situation.

## CHAPTER 15

### Utter Despair

Webster's Dictionary defines Utter Despair as "Completely Without Hope or Complete Hopelessness". My simpler definition is that all of your choices have been removed. You cannot go forward, you cannot go back, you cannot go left, you cannot go right. There simply are no choices left. It is a state that is both mental and physical. It is a position that you reach where life is completely without hope.

After both of my parents had died and I returned from Florida I was quickly approaching Utter Despair. I did not know it or understand it but it was quickly coming.

By now my drinking had reached what I would consider completely out of control. I did not have enough mouths to pour it in. Somewhere in this time frame something else had happened. The alcohol had stopped working. It would no longer cover the pain. If you are an alcoholic I can tell you there is nothing scarier than the moment when you become aware that your old friend alcohol has quit working. You are completely abandoned at that moment. You are naked and without any protection.

I had always convinced myself that I was not an alcoholic.