

## Beach Party Days: Chapter 18

*Forty-six years later, Thursday morning, October 4, 2007...*

It was five in the morning; Bo was driving to Newark Liberty International Airport. Denise was with him, still half asleep. They had an 8:00 AM flight and were about a half hour from the off-airport parking lot, “Bo, I’m not sure I’ll forgive you for getting me up this early. I need my beauty sleep,” she said while trying to stifle a yawn.

“You’re beautiful even when you haven’t slept a wink; remember I’ve seen you with your hair up in curlers and your face covered in face cream”, Bo said with a teasing smile. And they both laughed.

Bo then reflected on their life together. They had been together for over twenty years with a couple of breakups, but both times it seemed inevitable that they would get back together. In all that time they never got to the point of marrying; engaged, but not marriage; when one of them wanted to get married, the other didn’t and vice-versa. “I guess we are both a bit gun shy since each of us were married and divorced twice, before we met”, he thought to himself.

“Bo, I bet you are looking forward to another get-together with the gang. I know I’m looking forward to seeing Ellie and Carlie again”, Denise said.

“Yeah, I’m always up for these long weekends with the guys. You know me, show me a beach and I’m happy as a pig in shit”, Bo replied. “Speaking of the beach, pull that Beach Boys CD out of the glove compartment and pop it in, please.” Denise inserted the CD and the first song that played was “California Girls”...

*Well East coast girls are hip  
I really dig those styles they wear  
And the Southern girls with the way they talk  
They knock me out when I'm down there*

*The Mid-West farmer's daughters really make you feel alright  
And the Northern girls with the way they kiss  
They keep their boyfriends warm at night*

*I wish they all could be California  
I wish they all could be California  
I wish they all could be California girls*

*The West coast has the sunshine  
And the girls all get so tanned  
I dig a french bikini on Hawaii island  
Dolls by a palm tree in the sand...*

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

“Are you ever going to outgrow the Beach Boys music, Bo?” laughed Denise.

“Never!” came back Bo’s emphatic reply.

Shortly after they arrived at the parking lot, they took the shuttle to Terminal C, and since both had only carry-on bags and had printed their boarding passes yesterday, they headed toward the security line. They were pleasantly surprised that the line at the security station was not very long and they were at the gate with plenty of time to spare.

As they sat in adjoining seats at the gate, Denise asked “What time did Burn say he and Carlie would meet us?”

“Carlie will be at the airport at ten o’clock when we are scheduled to arrive. Then she will drive you down to open up the cottage and unload her car with the bedding, towels and some food”, Bo answered. Then he continued, “Rafe isn’t scheduled in until about twelve-ten, so I’ll find a bar to sit at. Burn will leave work at around eleven and meet me in the Norfolk airport; the two of us will wait for Rafe at the bar. When Rafe arrives we’ll grab some lunch and then head down to the cottage on the Outer Banks. Burn didn’t say, but I think it’s probably in Kill Devil Hills near where we’ve stayed before.”

“Well, let’s hope our plane and Rafe’s plane aren’t delayed; especially Rafe’s plane. I’d hate for you and Burn to get smashed if Rafe arrives late”, Denise said half teasing, but with an undertone that indicated some concern.

“Burn is driving so he won’t have too much to drink,” Bo said, and then catching her drift, he added, “and I will take it easy, too, so you don’t have to worry, OK?”

“OK, Bo. But I do worry about you and the guys when you all get together; it’s like you’re all eighteen again, or wish you were,” Denise said and planted a kiss on Bo’s cheek.

“Well, we do go a long way back; nearly fifty years now. For me it has been one of the greatest things that we did when we renewed our friendship seven years ago”, Bo said, thinking back to that first reunion in October, 2000 and all of the times since then that Earle, James, Rafe and he had gotten together. Then bringing his thoughts back to the moment, he searched in his carry on duffel bag and pulled out the book he had brought along. It was a James Patterson novel, Beach Road, that he had just started reading. Denise followed Bo’s lead and got the October issue of Vogue magazine from her carry on and started to leaf through until she found the article, “Breast Cancer Update”, she had begun reading last night. They still had nearly an hour before the boarding of the plane would begin.

---

*...Every day's a new day in love with you  
With each day comes a new way of loving you  
Every time I kiss your lips my mind starts to wander*

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

*And if all my dreams come true  
I'll be spending time with you*

*Oh, I love you more today than yesterday  
But not as much as tomorrow  
I love you more today than yesterday  
But, darling, not as much as tomorrow*

*Tomorrow's date means springtime's just a day away  
Cupid, we don't need ya now, be on your way  
I thank the lord for love like ours that grows ever stronger  
And I always will be true  
I know you feel the same way too*

*Oh, I love you more today than yesterday  
But not as much as tomorrow  
I love you more today than yesterday  
But only half as much as tomorrow...*

James “Hein” Heinrich and his wife Ellie were on their way North on Route 17. They had packed the Kia Sorento SUV the night before and left their home in Charleston, SC at seven this morning. They expected to arrive at the cottage in Kill Devil Hills, NC around three in the afternoon. On the oldies station, the 1969 hit song “More Today than Yesterday”, by The Spiral Starecase had just ended.

James looked over at Ellie and thought the lyrics couldn't be more true to the way he felt about her. Ellie had been an absolute blessing for him after the contentious divorce from his first wife, Lorrie. James knew that it was mutual for Ellie, as she, too, had a first marriage that ended badly. James looked admiringly at Ellie. She sensed it and looked back at James, wondering why he was smiling. He was taking in Ellie's ovular face, her auburn hair, twinkling blue eyes, and full red lips. “She's still attractive to me; maybe a few pounds heavier than when we married, but the years have been kind to her”, he thought. Ellie smiled back at James. Ellie's five feet, four inch frame was comfortably seated in the passenger seat.

Ellie had been a god send for him throughout the ups and downs. There was the time he almost died of a heart attack, and just recently he was hospitalized with a severe case of pneumonia. Ellie was at the hospital throughout his stay and then attended his every need during a protracted recovery. Although he still was not yet a hundred percent, he had recovered enough for them to make the trip to Kill Devil Hills, on the Outer Banks. He and Ellie were looking forward to getting together with the gang again; it had been six months since they had entertained the gang at their home in Charleston.

True to Ellie's sense of humor and outright honesty, she remarked to James, using his first and middle initials as her pet name for him, “J.T., Why do we have to drive eight hours to go to a beach when we are only a half hour from the beach in Charleston? I don't quit see the logic in that.”

## Beach Party Days: Chapter 18

James looked over at Ellie, smiled and answered, using his pet name for her, “Now, Mixi, we already talked about this. The gang has come down to Charleston for five times over the past 6 years in the spring and in all that time we have only gone up to the Outer Banks once and that was in October, 2005. Before that the last time we had a get-together on the Outer Banks was in 2001.”

“Yes, but we also had get-togethers at The Burnell’s home in Virginia a couple of times”, Ellie observed.

“That’s right”, James replied, “That was to help Burn build porches on that original outside kitchen building they are converting into a guest house.” Then James added with his customary humor, “And best of all, they let me play foreman and watch them work while I lay in the hammock tied to the trees by the guest house. That was the ideal job for me, har,har,har.”

“Well, last I heard that guest house still isn’t finished”, Ellie observed. “But I guess we’d better not bring it up; it might be a sore spot between Burn and Carlie.”

“I think that would be wise”, James said with a knowing smile.

After a pause in the conversation, Ellie asked, “Are you sure you packed your medicine, J.T.?”

“Yes, dear, it’s in with my shaving kit”, James answered.

Then Ellie closed her eyes and dozed off, leaving James to concentrate on the driving; he switched the radio to a new FM station as they had traveled beyond the reception range of the Charleston station. James sighed contentedly as he anticipated getting to see his old buddies again.

---

Traffic on Interstate 94 was not too bad at 5:30 AM central time, as Rafe Cerny drove toward General Mitchell International Airport. Rafe had been working on a consulting contract in the Milwaukee area for almost a year now and this morning he had a 7:30 AM flight to Norfolk, VA, after a stop in Cincinnati. “Burn is scheduled to get there around eleven-thirty Eastern Time; Bo and Denise are scheduled to arrive around ten and my flight is due just after Noon”, Rafe was going over the plan in his mind. “I hope to hell there are no delays – at least the weather is supposed to hold up all the way through; too bad I couldn’t get a direct flight.”

As he was negotiating a lane change, “Still”, a 1970’s Lionel Richie song, when he was with the Commodores, came on the radio and Rafe sang along...

*Lady  
Morning's just a moment away*

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

*And I'm without you once again  
You laughed at me  
You said you never needed me  
I wonder if you need me now*

*We played the games that people play  
We made our mistakes along the way  
Somehow I know deep in my heart  
You needed me  
Remembering the pain if I must say  
It's deep in my mind and locked away  
But then most of all  
I do love you...  
Still*

*Those memories  
Times I'm sure we'll never forget  
Those feelings we can put aside  
For what we had  
Sometimes I try to understand  
But it's so heavy on my mind*

*So many dreams that flew away  
So many words we didn't say  
Two people lost in a storm  
Where did we go?  
Where'd we go?  
We lost what we both had found  
You know we let each other down  
But then most of all  
I do love you...  
Still*

*We played the games that people play  
We made our mistakes along the way  
Somehow I know deep in my heart  
You needed me  
'Cause I needed you so desperately  
We were too blind to see  
But then most of all  
I do love you...  
Still!*

The song had a poignant effect on Rafe, especially the pregnant pause before Richie whispers the word “Still”. It brought back memories that were still very much engraved on his mind and in his heart. “I really miss her!” he said aloud, while navigating around a backup of

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

traffic getting off at an exit. He was thinking about her again, practically a daily thing; it had become an imbedded habit that he couldn't seem to shake, even though a year had passed. Too many things reminded him of how happy he had been with her, even though the relationship lasted but eight months. Sarah Williams had been like a gift from heaven; they seemed to have a great deal in common. "More than I ever felt with Paula in the thirty-four years we were married", Rafe silently voiced to himself. "Ah, but that's not being exactly fair; for the first twenty-four years or so the marriage was good, then we just grew apart."

He and Sarah had started dating in December, 2005, eighteen months after the divorce from Paula was finalized. He had noticed Sarah at church and felt an attraction to her, but assumed she was probably in a relationship with someone. A mutual friend at church adroitly got them together at church functions, and when Rafe asked Sarah to go with him to a dinner dance, she not only accepted, but seemed pleased he had asked. That first date was fun, after the initial nervousness of dating again, and Rafe asked Sarah for another date. Within a month they had started to date every week. By the third month it seemed as though the relationship had been raised to a new level; friends at church were noticing that they were acting like two teenagers; bright and cheerful Sarah, whose face was sunshine and in whose company was a comfort and gladness he had rarely known.

Then Sarah moved. It wasn't a surprise; just before they had started dating Sarah had bought property in the Milwaukee suburbs, near one of her sons and was having a house built there. But they thought they could continue the relationship by alternating travel on weekends between New Jersey and Wisconsin. At first it looked as though it might work out, but then Sarah seemed to change. Rafe wanted to continue the relationship, but Sarah didn't and so it ended. Rafe had tried to get a consulting contract in the suburbs near Sarah in hopes that the relationship could be rekindled, but the closest he could get was just outside of downtown Milwaukee. It made no difference; Sarah did not believe that it would work out. "Maybe I pushed too hard", he thought; "after all she did have a bad divorce and had not had been in a relationship for a long time when we started dating."

Rafe had to snap out of his reverie – the exit for the airport was just ahead. He exited, guided the car to an off airport parking lot and caught the shuttle. After clearing security, he sat at the gate waiting the time for boarding. A four day weekend with his buddies and their wives at a rental cottage in Kill Devil Hills was just hours away.

---

Earle "Burn" Burnell made the final entry in the spreadsheet on his office computer; this completed the estimate for a bid on a new construction contract, which if it won the day would bring in a cool \$5 Million gross income for his company. Earle was the newly appointed Director of the Industrial Construction Department at Norfolk Construction Company. He was in a hurry to wrap up the estimate, because he was taking off at 11:00 AM to pick up Bo and Rafe at the Norfolk International Airport and wanted to get there around eleven-thirty.

He quickly went over the plan in his mind. Bo had called earlier when he and Denise arrived in Norfolk around ten o'clock. Carlie, his wife, had met Bo and Denise at the airport and

## Beach Party Days: Chapter 18

she and Denise were already on the way down to the cottage Carlie rented in Kill Devil Hills. It was their semi-annual get-together that had become nearly a ritual. Carlie had taken two days vacation and was driving down in the 2006 silver family Ford 500 with all the bed linens, towels and supplies they would need for the four day event. Bo was waiting in the airport for Earle and the two of them will wait for Rafe to arrive. Then after a quick lunch, Earle would take the three of them down to the cottage in the company pickup.

Earl quickly sent off the estimate attached to an email to the Accounting Department and then closed down all the open applications, signed off, and powered off his computer. He stood up, stretched his still trim 6' 3" gangly frame, grabbed his appointment book and walked quickly out of the building to the company supplied pick up truck in the parking lot. Once in the truck with his seat belt clicked, he started the truck and drove out of the parking lot onto the main street toward the interstate. Coming through the radio speakers was an oldie song by Ray Charles, "Born to Lose"...

*Born to lose, I've lived my life in vain  
Every dream has only brought me pain  
All my life I've always been so blue  
Born to lose and now I'm losing you*

Born to lose, it seems so hard to bear  
How I long to always have you near  
You've grown tired and now you say we're through  
Born to lose and now I'm losing you...

He had to laugh at the memory that the song evoked. It was back in the fall of 1961 and Patty Riley had flown down to Baton Rouge to spend the weekend with Earle, after he had re-matriculated at LSC. They had dated all that summer and Earle had hoped they would continue to develop a lasting relationship. They had a busy weekend with football games and parties, but then as she was leaving on Sunday, Patty dropped a bombshell on Earle. It seems she had met a Wall Street high flyer and told Earle that she was serious about him and that she was breaking up with Earle. At the time Earle was devastated. He spent that night at the Tiger Inn, eating pickled pigs feet, and quail eggs, hot sausage & crackers, and washing it down with lots of beer. He must have played the Ray Charles songs "Born to Lose" and "Let's Go Get Stoned" a hundred times on the juke box that night. Then he got into a fight with some son of a bitch that spit on his pinball machine.

Earle shook off that memory and focused on the approaching exit off the freeway that would take him to the airport. Ten minutes later he parked the truck in the short term parking lot just outside the main terminal. He entered the terminal and looked for the bar where Bo had said he would wait for him. "Ah, there it is", he said to himself; "and there's Bo sitting at the bar". Knowing that Bo was nearly deaf in one ear and easily surprised, Earle snuck up behind Bo and slipped his right hand across the right side of Bo's face brushing his ear and cheek.

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

“Jesus Christ!” Bo yelled as he nearly jumped off the bar stool. Earle laughed and Bo turned around quickly and said, “Damn it, Burn, don’t do that. You nearly gave me a heart attack!”

“Still skittish, I see”, Earle said with a laugh, and Bo had to laugh as well.

“Grab a stool”, Bo directed, “what do you want to drink, I’ve got a tab running?” He signaled the bar maid and then added, “I checked the arrivals screen and Rafe’s flight should get in on time, so we have time for a drink. Rafe called when he was leaving Cincinnati and I told him to meet us here.”

The bar maid came over and Earle ordered a draft of Bud Light. He sat down next to Bo and the two waited and talked about their jobs while waiting for Rafe to arrive.

---

“I might have known you two would be half shit faced by the time I arrived”, Rafe said jokingly as he came up behind Bo and Earle in the airport bar. He dropped his carry on bags next to Bo’s, shared a bear hug with them and sat down on a stool next to Earle.

“Good, you made it on time. You’ve got some catching up to do, Rafe”, Earle said half seriously.

Bo flagged the bar maid over and said pointing over to Rafe, “Give this old-timer there a drink and put it on my tab, please”. Rafe ordered a Dewers and water. They chatted a bit about their jobs and wishing they could all afford to retire. After the three of them finished their drinks, Bo paid the tab.

Bo and Rafe picked up their bags and the three headed across the center court to Michael’s Sea Food Restaurant for a quick lunch. The restaurant was nearly empty, so Rafe walked right by a sign that said, “Please wait to be seated”, and headed toward an open table for four. Just then the hostess rushed over to lead them to an assigned table.

“Wait, Rafe, don’t you read signs?” Earle yelled out; then seeing the hostess, Rafe stopped in his tracks.

“You’ll have to excuse our friend there; he’s from one of those Slavic countries and doesn’t read English very well”, Bo said to the hostess. People at one of the occupied tables laughed and so did the hostess.

The hostess then led them over to the table that Rafe had originally been headed for and as she seated them, she played along at Rafe’s expense. “Here’s our menus”, and talking to Bo she joked, “you’ll have to read it for him.” Then looking at Rafe, she said haltingly as if she were carefully pronouncing each word to a foreigner, “Your friend here will read you the menu and help you order.” That brought more laughs from the patrons who occupied the table across the way and Bo and Earle joined in. Rafe also laughed and took the ribbing in stride.



## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

The three men had a quick lunch of the Maryland crab cakes special and a round of drinks. Rafe picked up the tab and then after a visit to the men's room, they left the terminal, put the luggage in the back of the pick up and headed for the Outer Banks.

---

Ninety minutes after leaving the airport, they had crossed the Wright Memorial Bridge on U.S. Route 158 and were at the town of Southern Shores on the Outer Banks. Earle pulled the pick up truck into a bank where Bo and Rafe accessed an ATM. They had discussed and agreed that they would each put a hundred dollars per person into a kitty (they'd inform James when he arrived), from which they would withdraw whenever they went to the store for food, beer and supplies, and for eating out in a restaurant one night. Next stop was to Carlie's sister's house to borrow some beach chairs and a beach umbrella. After that they went on to a Farm Barn supermarket to pick up a case of beer and a bag of ice, and then finally on to the three bedroom cottage in Kill Devil Hills.

The cottage (all houses that are not mansion-sized are generally called cottages on the Outer Banks) was one block off the beach with a pathway leading to the ocean beach, and like all the cottages it was built up on pilings with the living quarters up a flight of stairs.

Earle drove the pickup truck onto the second of two concrete parking slabs that ended underneath the house, alongside the Ford 500 that Carlie and Denise had arrived in a couple hours earlier. After unpacking the pickup truck the three men walked up the stairs and joined Carlie and Denise. The women had long finished opening up the cottage, putting away the supplies and getting the three bedrooms set up with pillows, sheets, and towels. They had been sitting talking in the living room.

“Well it's about time you guys showed up. We were beginning to think you had gotten yourselves in trouble somewhere after leaving the airport”, Carlie said jokingly. “Bo, you and Denise are in the bedroom at the end of the hall, on the right hand side. James and Ellie will be in the one opposite the second bathroom. Rafe, you've got your choice of one of these two couches in the living room; both have pull-out beds.”

Bo dropped his bags in his assigned bedroom and Rafe dropped his out on the enclosed side porch adjacent to the living room. Then Earle some of the ice in the cooler and the rest in the freezer, and Bo and Rafe loaded the cooler with half of the case of beer, after opening three bottles for each to drink and raising a toast. The women were already drinking cokes. Rafe called James on James's cell phone to find out how far along they were and their expected time of arrival. Ellie answered. She reported that they had stopped off to get something to eat and would be there about three-thirty. It was now almost three o'clock.

While they awaited James and Ellie, Bo, Earle and Rafe grabbed another round of beer and beach chairs and walked the path over to the beach. They sat down looking out at the waves rolling in and listening to the sound of the ocean. That oh so familiar sound that had been such a

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

big part of their memories when their friendship was initially cemented back in those high school and post high school years, culminating in that summer of 1961.

The three long time friends returned from the beach in time to greet their fourth old friend James. They helped James and Ellie unpack their SUV and stash their bags in their bedroom. Then the group of seven sat around the living room discussing and making plans for the weekend.

“So it’s settled then.” Earle was summing up the discussion. “Tonight we go out to JK’s Seafood Restaurant. Tomorrow, Friday, we go to the beach before and after lunch; the gals will go out shopping...”

“Without the credit cards”, Bo interjected in a kidding way.

“Who says?” responded Denise.

“Who needs credit cards? We have other resources”, Ellie remarked half-seriously.

“That’s right!” Carlie said with a twinkle in her eye and a playful poke in Earle’s ribs.

“Ok, Ok! Let me finish, alright?” Earle asked rhetorically. “Also, tomorrow the guys will go out food shopping for steaks we can cook on the grill and whatever other fixins’ we need...”

This time Carlie interrupted, “You don’t fool us; you’re probably going to make another beer run, as well.” Denise looked at Bo and nodded in agreement, as if to say, “Touché”, and Ellie shrugged her shoulders as if to say, “What else is new”.

“Well, Darlin’ you know we are all growing boys and need something to wash down all the good food we’re about to consume this weekend”, Earle said lightheartedly. “Now as I was saying before all these interruptions”...

“You’re all growing alright, but horizontally, not vertically”, chimed in Denise. And everyone shared a laugh.

Rafe, who had been smiling and silently listening with amusement to the repartee, said half seriously, “Now ladies, give the man a break; he’s trying to sum up the plans, so we’re all on the same page and know what to expect for the weekend.”

“Ok, Rafe, we’re going to put you in charge to make sure our men, your buddies, don’t go overboard, and if you don’t do a good job, there will be hell to pay; just remember that saying, there’s no fury like that of a woman scorned, or something like that”, joked Denise with a mischievous smile. Another short round of laughter followed.

“Ouch!” Rafe responded with pretended hurt.

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

“Ok, now let me finish the plans we discussed”, Earle tried again, sounding a bit exasperated. “So, On Saturday, the guys will go out and get all the fixins for the world famous ‘Burn’ gumbo I’ll make for dinner. This year we agreed that we’ll do a shrimp, oysters, and andouille sausage gumbo, instead of the chicken and andouille sausage gumbo we’ve done in the past. I think I’ll add some crabmeat, too.”

“And we’ll probably need to do another beer run”, Rafe added teasingly. For that he got a wry smile from Carlie and a sham slap on the arm from Denise. Ellie merely shrugged her shoulders.

“Ahem!” Earle continued. “And then on Sunday, we pack and clean up the place before heading out. Did I miss anything?”

“Only the part about a beer run”, said James, jokingly with a hearty laugh. And everyone joined in. The gang was now primed for another one of their get-togethers that began in the fall of 2000 and had become an annual event, and in a few of those a semi-annual event.

---

*Saturday afternoon, October 6, 2007...*

The laughter rang out from the upper porch of the cottage that looked out toward the ocean one hundred yards away. The four friends were sitting on the walnut stained wooden benches drinking a beer.

“You should have been there, Hein. Bo jumped a foot off the ground when I sneaked up behind him and slipped an eight inch long package of Genoa salami into his hand and said, ‘hold this for me’; Bo reacted like it was a huge dick”. For the benefit of James, who had missed it, Earle had just finished relating what had happened when he, Bo, and Rafe had gone to the deli and bakery store to get bread to accompany the night’s dinner with Earle’s special gumbo recipe. While the three of them were out food shopping, James and Ellie had taken a drive down the road to see the two cottages that James and his first wife, Lorrie, had owned before they had divorced.

As the laughter died down, Bo said, “Damn, now I know why I look forward to our get-togethers. I think I laugh more on these weekends than I do the rest of the year.”

“I know what you mean”, responded Rafe.

“That goes for me, too”, said James.

“It does help to temporarily forget the stress of work and all the other damn concerns that each of us have to deal with”, said Earle.

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

After a short pause, James asked rhetorically, “how many times have we gotten together since that first one back in 2000? As I recall, after the first one here in the fall on the Outer Banks, we had a second just about a year later, again on the Outer Banks. Both of those were also in Kill Devil Hills but at another cottage.”

“That cottage was a few blocks south of this one,” added Earle. “It was damaged in the storm several years ago and was replaced with a much bigger cottage.”

“Yeah, Rafe and I walked down that way the past two mornings; it is huge”, said Bo.

“That second get-together was just about a month after 9-11 and we were watching a lot of the news on the TV,” Rafe added. “That was a heartbreaking and tragic time.”

“Yeah, those fucking terrorist bastards! And after all these years, we still haven’t nailed that son-of-a-bitch, Bin Laden!” Bo said angrily. The others nodded that they felt the same. Then Bo added, “But I believe we had enough of our people killed and we should bring our troops home in an orderly way and let those assholes kill themselves off without us losing anymore of our troops.”

“Yeah, but we can’t just withdraw without some form of government in place and some stability, or else the fuckin’ Iranians will take over; and we know that they want to eradicate Israel and stick it to us”, shot back James.

“You are both right in a way”, injected Rafe. “If it wasn’t for our dependence on foreign oil, we could stop trying to be the World Police; and now that we have liberated the Iraqis from Hussein, let them grow the balls to fight against the Jihadist fanatics. So, I think we would all agree that our government should move heaven and earth to establish the kind of ten-year objective that JFK did with the space program; ask the American people to support a program that gets us off of dependency on imported oil.”

“Yeah we would still need to provide them some backup”, added Earle, “but we probably could get the U.N. to put in a multi-national force to keep the peace while the Iraqis establish a permanent government.”

“I agree with getting off foreign oil, but we would need to tell the environmentalists to shut the fuck up; that part of the program must be drilling in that part of Alaska where no animals are endangered”, Bo responded with intensity. “That goes as well for other areas of our coasts, where deep drilling may yield more supplies; and then combine that with a wide-ranging plan for alternative sources like wind, water, ethanol and something I just read about - capturing geo-thermal energy from deep down in the earth.”

James came back with, “I agree. That should be our long term strategy. But in the short run we need to continue to fight the fucking Jihadists, and for my money it’s better to do that in the Middle East, or *anywhere* other than the good ole’ U.S.A. So let’s keep them busy over there, and beef up our intelligence forces and border security to at least make it a lot more difficult for another 9-11 type of attack to happen. But what scares me the most is if the bastards are able to

## Beach Party Days: Chapter 18

poison our water supplies or detonate some dirty nuclear device in a populous area. That scares the shit out of me”.

After a minute or so of reflection on the conversation that had just occurred, all four of the men drew a deep breath, shook their heads and internalized the deep concern they all felt about the world situation and their fear of what was happening to the America of their youth. Each of them had doubts or uncertainties about what America’s role should be today with respect to the rest of the world.

But these men were products of a time when America was still in its ascendancy as the leader of the free world. A time when “made in America” was *the* prime standard; when the U.S dollar was still underpinned on the gold standard and America was the primary exporter of goods to the rest of the world. A time when American leadership, generosity and charity had rebuilt the economies of Japan and Germany, despite the fact that they were defeated enemies. Since then the U.S. had ceded to other countries the manufacture of nearly all consumer and durable goods. First it was the shoe business, then clothing and automobiles and steel and so many other manufactured goods. Now even our Service Industry was being sent off-shore; all this in the name of “global economy”. “What’s next?” Each of them silently wondered.

Another minute passed as the men gathered their thoughts, sipped on their scotch and smiled warmly at one another, as only old friends can do after a disconcerting talk on a subject that affects them deeply.

It was Earle who broke the silence and said with a deep sigh, “Well, ain’t any of us in a position to change things with the wave of our hands, so how about we get back to James’s recounting of our reunions”. Bo and Rafe nodded their agreement.

“Well that was 2001, and then the following spring in 2002 Ellie and I had all of you down to our place in Charleston”, James began again to recall the sequence. “Then if I recollect, we had another get-together in Charleston the spring of 2003 and then in the fall of 2003 we all went to Burn’s in Virginia to help put a porch and steps on the front of that guest house. And we went back again to Burn’s in August of 2004 to build the porch and steps on the back of the guest house.”

“Yeah, that’s when we had the beer butt chicken and the barbequed ribs”, interjected Rafe.

“Right,” James continued, “and then in the fall of 2004 we all went to the forty-fifth reunion with our QHS class in New Jersey. In the spring of 2005 we had everyone down to our place in Charleston again, this time after we had moved to that second home. The next get-together was in the fall of 2005 at this very cottage. In 2006 we had everyone down to Charleston in the spring and in December we all went to visit Roger and Gladys Vaccaro at their home in Kentucky.”

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

“Yeah, I’m glad we were able to do that. I hadn’t seen Roger and Gladys since the summer of 1961, and I guess the rest of you hadn’t seen them since just after high school,” said Bo.

“It was definitely a great idea to get out there to visit them,” said Rafe. “Roger and Gladys were as happy to see us, as we were to see them, especially since Roger has developed a rare case of some kind of muscular disease and is having some difficulty walking.”

Bo responded, “To see this guy who used to be like the Rock of Gibraltar having difficulty walking, even with a cane, just tore me up”.

Then Rafe added, “You’re saying it for all of us; it was an emotional scene when we left their home in Kentucky; five grown men fighting back the tears so as not to embarrass one another and holding out hope that his physical problems can be reversed”.

“God bless him, though”, said Earle. “He has a great attitude – there is no quit in Roger, just as he was when we played football together in high school.”

James offered, “We need to continue to pray that a modern medical cure will be found for his condition.” The others nodded their assent.

“Gladys certainly laid out the food”, Earle added, changing the subject somewhat to assuage the profound feelings they all felt.

“Leave it to Burn to bring up food”, Bo teased.

“Hey, food is one of my favorite pastimes; y’all know I love to eat”, Earle responded

“And he’s still almost as trim as he was in high school”, Rafe said laughing. “If I ate like Burn I’d have to waddle when I walked.”

“I think all that food just goes to his big feet”, Bo said kidding.

“Watch what you say, boy, or one of these size fourteen will go where the sun don’t shine and kick your ass back to Jersey,” Earle said with a mock threat. And they all enjoyed a laugh.

“Ok, did I miss anything?” asked James after the laughter died down.

“Just that this year we were all down in Charleston at your new house, and Roger and Gladys also joined us,” answered Rafe. “And of course we are here once again in Kill Devil Hills, where it all started”.

A few minutes later, the four friends saw that the women were walking back from the beach. As the women approached the cottage, they looked up at the men on the porch. “Burn, are you guys going to drink beer all day? That gumbo isn’t going to make itself”, chided Carlie.

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

“We were just getting ready to go down and start the preparations, Darlin’”, Earle answered good-naturedly. Then to the other three men, “It is about time to get that started.”

“I’ll cut up the peppers, while you get the roux started, Burn”, offered Rafe.

“And I’ll chop up the celery and onions”, said Bo.

“And I’ll perform my customary role as Supervisor”, James laughed, as the four made their way down the stairs to the main door to the living quarters of the cottage.

---

*Later that night...*

“Well, Burn, you did it again. That gumbo was delicious! I especially liked the change to the shrimp, crabmeat, oysters and sausage this time”, announced Ellie.

“Thanks, I love to eat and it’s even better when sharing a meal with old friends”, Earle responded to the compliment.

“Amen to that!” Rafe said.

Then as Bo and James started to clear the dishes, Carlie said, “Just put those in the sink, guys. Since y’all did the cookin’, the women will do the cleanup. You men can go relax.”

“Yes, and talk about that book you’ve been hinting at writing all these years”, interjected Denise.

“Thank god there’s a dishwasher here”, said Ellie with a short laugh, “washing dishes by hand is not one of my favorite things to do, and I don’t give a fig who knows it.” Then she turned to James and asked, “J.T. did you take your meds?”

“I was just about to do that, Mixi, but thanks for reminding me”, James replied; and he went over to the counter to pick up his meds and then to the sink to wash them down with a glass of water.

Once everyone was up and the table cleared, Bo said “It’s still kind of warm out tonight, why don’t we grab sweat shirts or something, in case the wind off the ocean gets chilly, and go up on the upper porch and chat about that book. We can bring the scotch for our traditional scotch tasting.”

“A little liquid refreshment will help to jog our memories”, replied Rafe.

“Ha! And then the stories about you guys’ past exploits will get more and more exaggerated with each drop of alcohol”, Denise said teasingly.

---

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 18**

“We’ll just stay down here and talk about y’all”, teased Carlie.

“Is there *that* much to say?” Ellie said rhetorically with her typical flair for humorously saying whatever came to mind. That brought a laugh from all.

Then the four men gathered sweat shirts, two bottles of water, glasses and the scotch – two bottles of single malt and a bottle of a blend that Earle had made and aged in a two liter wooden cask. They switched on the outside lights, exited through the door and walked up the stairs to the upper porch lit up by two flood lights. They settled on the two opposing benches with a table in the center where they placed their glasses, the water bottles and the three bottles of scotch. Each of them briefly wondering if he could piece together chronologically moments in his past that would be of interest to the others and good material for a book.



## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 19**

*Saturday evening, October 6, 2007continued...*

*On the upper porch of the beach cottage...*

“That Glenmorangie is my favorite of the two single malts, but I like your blend, too, Burn”, Rafe stated.

“It’s Glenmorangie’s twelve year old Madeira Wood Finish. On the tongue it’s smooth but spicy, initially sweet but then becoming drier, with a touch of cherry and vanilla, rum, butter, horehound, and licorice”, responded Earle. “That’s what I read in an article I picked up on the web.”

“Yeah, I agree, I like the Glenmorangie better than the Macallan”, Bo said, taking another sip”.

“I’m not an aficionado of scotch, but I agree on both the Glenmorangie and the Burn’s Blend”, James added.

“Ok,” James continued, “so let’s talk about this book. When we first got together in 2000, we all thought that it would be a good idea to write a book about our friendship; how we became friends in high school and later went our separate ways, and then forty years later reconnected through the Internet”.

Bo responded, “Yeah, we’ve talked about it for the past seven years, but we haven’t done much more than spend hours reminiscing and enjoying our get-togethers, but not getting anything down on paper.”

“Maybe it’s time to stop talking about it and doing something to make it happen”, Earle declared.

“I’ve got an idea”, Rafe offered. “Why not get a ghost writer to take our thoughts and rough words – our remembrances - and organize them into a book. I know a person in my church who writes for magazines and digests like Readers Digest. I bet he would do it for a small fee.”

Then James responded, “Well, hell, how hard would it be for us to do it together; I mean why pay someone when we would have to collect all our memories in writing through emails anyway. We just need to decide whether or not we are all committed.”

“Ok, yeah, we can all share emails and discuss our memories when we get together, but someone has to take all of that and organize it into a book,” suggested Bo. Then looking around at the other three, his eyes stopped on Rafe and he said, “Hey, Rafe, do you think you could be the organizer?” Earle and James looked at Rafe expectantly.

James spoke next, “How about it Rafe? Would you be willing?”

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 19**

Rafe looked at his three friends and after a brief hesitation said, “Well I’ll give it a shot, but I can’t do it alone. Each of you has to chip in by opening up about events and happenings in your lives that occurred during those years when we lost contact with one another. And if I send you an email asking for additional info or clarification about something you mentioned in our discussions, I’ll expect you to send me a quick response.”

“I can go with that”, Earle said nodding his head in affirmation.

“So can I”, said Bo.

“Me too”, said James.

“And when it is finished, all of our names will be credited as the authors”, Rafe said looking for agreement from the other three. When they each nodded, he continued, “Good, then it’s settled.”

“So how should we get this started?” asked Bo.

James responded by saying, “I think Rafe hinted at it a minute ago. Before we got together that first time in 2000, we shared a lot of emails about our memories of high school, so we have that as a starting point. Then in all of the times we’ve gotten together, we have shared some things about our memories just after high school and the college years, but as Rafe said, there is a lot we haven’t yet shared about those years when we lost contact with one or another of us.”

“Right”, responded Rafe, “So, who wants to go first and summarize the keys events and stories that they had during the years we all started to go our separate ways? I know; why don’t we start with the years following the summer of 1961 – that was the year Burn went back to school in Louisiana, I went back to school in Ohio, and Bo and Hein fell in love and were married not too long after.” When Rafe saw the other three shrug their shoulders as if to say, “why not”, he looked at James and asked, “How about it, Hein? Why don’t you start the ball rolling?”

---

*James’ account...*

“Well, let’s see; I guess I should start with the last years of my marine service”, James began. “I believe I already told you all about my being on guard for the JFK Inauguration and some of the stories at Camp David and in D.C.”

“But one story I don’t think I told you about happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis. In October 1962 before the crisis became a game of ‘who will back down first’, my platoon was boarded on one of about 12 buses from Camp Lejuene to Norfolk, where we were to board a ship that would be headed toward a blockade of Cuba. We had gone 36 hours without sleep due to being on alert and hopped up on coffee. We were in the lead bus and somewhere on the road to Norfolk, every marine on our bus had to take a wicked piss; but the asshole Lieutenant refused to

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 19**

let the bus stop. Finally a Sergeant knocked windows out of back of bus for those who couldn't hold it anymore; that led to the bus caravan stopping and 1200 marines pissing on the side of the road. All the house lights came on; the people must have thought it was an alien invasion." That drew a laugh from the other three men.

James continued, "Then once we got to Norfolk and Newport News, we doubled time onto the aircraft carrier, Boxer. We were on the carrier for three days and then transferred to the Francis Marion, command ship of amphibious squadron 12. We were part of the blockade of Cuba ordered by JFK to keep the Soviets from delivering missiles to the missile sights they had built in Cuba for Castro. We spent 75 days on that ship, wondering when we might get the orders to invade Cuba, or if we would get into a sea battle with the Soviet fleet. It was scary, and at the time we didn't know how close we really were to an all out war with the Russians. To pass the time and ease the tension, we played lots of poker." James hesitated a second, smiled, rubbed his hands together and added, "I was poker champ - paid a big, muscle-bound corporal to help me collect my debts." The other three men, who had been listening intently, couldn't help but chuckle – it was typical of James to come up with something humorous to offset the seriousness of an episode in his life.

James then continued, "About a year later, just before Thanksgiving, my unit was on duty at Camp David when the news reports came in that JFK was shot in Dallas. After he died and was transported up to D.C., we were on guard during the funeral procession. It was one of the saddest days I can remember. Thousands of people lined up along the streets sobbing – men as well as women."

James then changed the subject, "So, after spending the last two years of my service in G2 intelligence, I got my honorable discharge in February of '64, went home, and got engaged to Lorrie Bolles, who, as you may remember, I had been seeing since that summer of '61. Meeting her had given me added incentive to hitchhike home every weekend that I could get off the base."

Rafe then asked rhetorically, "And then you got married in June of '64, right?"

James responded, "Yes, it was June of '64. We were married in St. Cecelia's RC Church by Father Paul, same priest who married Bo and his first wife, a year earlier. In fact I was home on leave and Lorrie and I went to Bo's wedding; and so did you, Rafe, I think". Rafe nodded to confirm. Then James continued, "Well then Lorrie and I got an apartment at the Martha Washington Apartments in Quaytown. Jimmy Barrone's older brother, Tony and his first wife also lived there, and we double dated a lot with them. I got a job at the Wisdom Insurance Company in Newark and then on weekends I picked up a part-time job at Bill McKelvey's Atlantic gas station in Mason – you remember Bill, he graduated with us. When summer came Rafe was working in the Texaco gas station across the highway and when things were slow, we would play catch with a football, throwing it back and forth across the highway."

"Then we had the five year reunion at the Horse Neck Inn in Horse Neck. Bo and his first wife, Joan, were there. But that was the last time I can remember seeing Bo; after that everyone I knew from our class couldn't say where Bo was." Bo acknowledged by nodding. "That's when

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 19**

Rafe was dating an underage Italian girl; I remember her name was René. After the reunion we went back to our apartment for a nightcap and she got sick. Rafe had to have the emergency squad come and take her to Riverside Hospital.”

“What was that about?” asked Bo, with a mix of surprise and concern in his voice.

Rafe interjected to explain, “René was taking some kind of diet pills. She had a few whiskey sours at the reunion along with the food and when we got back to Hein’s apartment, she had another drink. The alcohol and the meds caused her to get bad stomach cramps and she practically fainted. At the hospital they had to pump out her stomach. I felt like a real shithead, when I had to call her parents and tell them what had happened, because the doctors in the emergency room wanted her to stay until the morning. She was only fifteen at the time, but could pass for nineteen. And the topper was that it was our first real date.”

Bo and Earle both shook their heads in empathy, understanding that Rafe could have been brought up on charges of feeding alcohol to a minor.

“So, James, what happened after 1964?” Rafe asked to get back to James’ recollections.

“Well, in 1965 my daughter Alicia was born and in 1967 my son Gary was born. During that time we moved into a larger apartment in Ruby Creek. Then, after semi-annual pay increases at Wisdom Insurance, in 1969 I left Wisdom for Residence Life in Manhattan for a good deal more money and we bought the house in Holmvale that summer, where we lived until the divorce in 1982. Seven years later, in 1976, I changed jobs again and got another bump in salary at Municipal Life in Newark; plus I made out because I no longer had to pay taxes to New York City and the commuting expenses were a lot less. Now that I think about it, Rafe started working at Wisdom Insurance a couple of years after I was there, and then he followed me to Municipal Life about two years after I got there; isn’t that right, Rafe?”

“Yep, Hein, you called me in 1978 about the reorganization that Municipal was going through and that they were hiring”, Rafe confirmed. “Then I interviewed and got hired at a good salary boost.”

James continued, “I need to back up a little. In 1965, Lorrie changed jobs for a bigger salary and better benefits. During that time, Rafe continued dating René, and they got engaged, but it didn’t last. But while they were together, her father got us part time work tending bar for a catering outfit. After Rafe and René split up, Rafe met Paula at the Wisdom, and when they got married, I was his Best Man.”

“Later In 1969, we went to the QHS ten-year reunion with Rafe and Paula. They stayed over at our house in Holmvale. And around that time I re-connected with my old Marine buddy, Stan DelaCrois. We had a lot of parties over at our house with Stan and his wife Jill, and Rafe and Paula. We went to the fifteenth and the twentieth QHS reunions with Rafe and Paula. Along about 1976, we bought the first cottage in Nags Head and started renting it out; two years later, about 1979 we bought the second cottage in Nags Head, again renting it out. We barely covered

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 19**

the mortgage with the rent and while Lorrie and the kids got to use them a lot during summers and off season, I got to use them much less, since I had a lot less vacation than Lorrie.”

James hesitated, his voice becoming more serious when he finally continued, “It was in 1981 that I came home early from work and found Lorrie in bed with a neighbor guy – I later learned that it wasn’t the first time; it had been going on for two months.”

“Jesus, Hein, it must have been a real shocker”, Earle interjected.

“Yeah, it definitely was”, James replied. “After the initial feeling of disbelief, I felt so angry the thought of killing both of them entered my mind, but just for a brief moment. She didn’t know I had my marine issued 45 stashed in a hidden spot in my tool bench in the basement. After that, all I felt was hurt and betrayed.” Bo put his arm around James’s shoulders and gave him a quick, sympathetic tug and Rafe tapped James on the upper arm. James continued, “Then, I’ve already told you about the negotiations leading up to the divorce, the initial settlement and about how Lorrie went back to courts eight years later and got that son-of-a-bitch judge to grant her a large increase in the settlement for child support, supposedly so the kids could go to more elite and more expensive colleges.”

James cleared his throat and in his inimitable way of once again adding humor to a serious conversation said jokingly, “My buddy Stan DelaCrois offered to hire somebody to rub her out or at least break both her legs, but I told him no, Har, Har.” Then more seriously, “But I got even in my own way. By then I had met and married, Ellie, the woman that has made it all seem worthwhile. After getting married, we moved to Florida in 1984, where I set up my own insurance agency as an agent for Municipal Life. So, we thumbed our noses at Lorrie and the Judge for several years, but then Lorrie got the judge to issue a warrant for my arrest if I ever set foot back in New Jersey. But Ellie still had kids and grandkids in New Jersey from her first marriage, so after a while, we agreed to pay the vigerish. Then my insurance business went to hell because Municipal ran into financial problems, and then I had the heart attack, which almost sent me to that castle in the sky. We wound up taking a ten year loan to pay for the judgment.”

James took a breath and continued, “Then the rest you pretty much know. Rafe somehow got my Florida address and phone number and called me around the time of the 1994 class reunion; that was while the arrest warrant was still in effect. Then in late 1999 after I recovered from the heart attack and we had reached a settlement with Lorrie, we moved up to Charleston. Ellie and I came up to New Jersey and I contacted Rafe on the phone – I think I got his number from his mom. We exchanged email addresses and then somehow, I don’t recall exactly, the four of us were communicating via email and planning our first get-together in Nags Head.”

After a couple of minutes to absorb James’s account, Rafe said, “Thanks Hein that fills in a lot of gaps for the rest of us.”

“Yeah, thanks Hein that was interesting”, added Bo; and Earle nodded.

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 20**

*Saturday evening, October 6, 2007 continued...*

*Still on the upper porch of the beach cottage...*

“Ok, who wants to go next? How about it Burn; do you want to go next?” Rafe asked, looking expectantly at Earle.

“Well, what the hell; why not”, Earle replied.

“Just keep it clean, Burn, I’ve heard some of the wild things you did with those Southern girls”, joked Bo.

“You must be thinking my history is like yours, Bo”, laughed Earle. And the others laughed as well.

---

*Earle’s account...*

“Ok, as you know when the summer of 1961 ended, on my way back to Louisiana, I drove Rafe back to Milton College in Ohio. We drove down in my blue ’56 Ford.”

Rafe added, “On our way down I remember we stopped in West Virginia at Burn’s...was it your Uncle’s or Grandfather’s farm?” as he turned back for confirmation from Earle.

“Uncle Walter’s”, Earle answered.

“And guys, it was a nice farm, but I still remember it had an outhouse. I think that was my first experience with using an outhouse and I remember wondering what it would be like in the dead of winter, with a couple feet of snow on the ground, to have to trundle out there to take a crap in the middle of the night”, Rafe recalled.

Bo shook his head and said, “I can’t imagine”.

“You Yankees are a bunch of pussies!” Earle jokingly retorted. “My 80 year old Aunt has no problems with it. Y’all just have had life too easy. It would have been the other way around if the South had beaten the North”. That drew a chuckle from the others.

Then Earle continued, “After stopping at my Uncle Walter’s in West Virginia, we stayed overnight. Then I spent the next night in Mason with Rafe at his Frat House. We went out drinking and I remember I still had a crush on Patty Ryan, the girl from that Ruby Creek crowd we hooked up with that summer, and I was commiserating with Rafe about her. She was a hottie; lots of tits and rubs, but no pussy. I remember on our last date her mother, knowing I was going back to LSC telling me to leave her daughter as I found her. And I think Rafe was telling me

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 20**

about how he was interested in that black gal that was always with Nathan – can't remember her name.”

“That must have been Pam - Pam Rambler”, Rafe interjected.

“Right”, Earle replied then continued. “Then the next morning I drove on down to Baton Rouge to re-enroll at LSC. In the fall of 1961, Patty Ryan flew down for an LSC game and told me about her new boyfriend in NYC as she was leaving for the plane back to Jersey. I went to the local pub to drown my sorrows. The Ray Charles song, “Born to Lose” was my big play on Juke box. Beer was now 30 Cents. Inflation!! I applied myself and did better in school. Then later that fall semester I met Dandrelle and lost my virginity; but after that first time, she would not see me any more - perhaps I did something wrong; like lasting about 15 seconds.” The other men knowingly grinned.

Earle resumed, “Then I met Jim Lasker again who had been in the same dorm my freshman year. We became good friends and still have seen each other over the years. He could drink more than anybody except Keith Joseph, who showed up in 1963 as a 16 yr old like I did in 1959. The three of us had a great time at LSC. Jim graduated and went to law school and became a lawyer. He had a photographic mind as he could read book and recite what he read page by page. Keith flunked out and later went to Vietnam and supposedly got a nut shot off!”

“During my sophomore year at LSC in 1962, I met Lilly. She was the Love of my LSC days. We went out for couple of years, got engaged, until I left school again in May of 1965. Then I moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee and worked as a pipe fitter. It was there I met a girl named June, whose mother ran a local BBQ; June really kept me hot. Her Mother caught us in bed one night. Judy told me not to move and she wouldn't notice me. Her mother never acknowledged it later as I saw her daughter a lot. Around that time I bought the 1965 High Performance Mustang; 271 horsepower, with four on the floor. It was blue with a white vinyl top and would beat a lot of Chevys; women liked it.”

“Sometime in the summer of '66 Lilly broke it off and gave me back the .75 caret diamond I had paid \$20.00 a month for a year. Great Quality! Then in the fall the Army drafted me the day after I had signed into the Army Reserve to escape Vietnam. I would have been killed for sure if I had gone over there, as I would have wanted to be on lead and shoot first. The draft notice gave me several months before I had to report for active duty, so I went to Camden, South Carolina and worked for DuPont as pipe sketcher. Amy the waitress and Beth the farmer's daughter kept me warm during that winter of '66 to '67. I was finally getting used to women and making love.”

James laughed and cracked, “A farmer's daughter? How many old jokes we used to hear about farmer's daughters? Did you have any of those kinds of episodes?”

Earle laughed and responded, “Nah, I don't think the father was wise to it, but he did have a gun rack in his pick up truck with a hunting rifle and a shotgun. So I cooled it after about a month or so, but we hooked up again in Baton Rouge – I'll come back to that later.”

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 20**

“After Lily, there was one time four of us from LSC went on a road trip to a whore house in Opelousas, just west of Baton Rouge. By the time the girl washed my dick I was really ready. That was probably the fastest \$25 she made that night. On the way back, Jim Lasker was driving my '65 Mustang and he fell asleep at the wheel and almost rolled the '65 up on edge, swears he touched the ground with his hand and pushed us back down. Could be true, but I couldn't prove it, 'cause I was in back more than slightly inebriated”

“Then what, Burn?” asked Bo.

Earle continued, “Then the Army made me go back to Baton Rouge before active duty. I roomed with Keith and one night at a bar, he bet me twenty dollars that I couldn't pick up a babe who was there and screw her on the first date. I introduced myself and met Lucy, who was a divorcee and horny as hell - very easy to win that twenty bucks. Lucy was a grocery store clerk and she kept me warm the remainder of that winter, before I went on to Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri for 179 days. While stationed there, several of us had some wild times at some girls' college west of the fort; three of us horny soldiers and three college coeds in their off campus apartment with one bedroom, two beds and one shower. The Missouri girls' college was probably my wildest sex time. Four people in the shower at one time – that was pretty wild even for a twenty-three or twenty-four year old. I had a lot of catching up for being so shy and backward towards girls for so many years.”

Then Rafe interjected with a short laugh, “Seems to me you didn't waste a hell of a lot time getting caught up!” Bo and James laughed in agreement.

Earle smiled, shrugged his shoulders and repeated, “But it's true, y'all knew me in high school and that year of '61. Y'all knew how shy I was with the girls, especially during those QHS years.”

“Yeah, we know. The girls all thought you were a real southern gentleman”, Bo said kidding. “So, after you finished up your Army stint, then what?”

“After I got out of the Army, I went back to Baton Rouge and went to the union hall and got a job as a union pipe fitter working at local chemical plants and refineries. I was making good money, partying and keeping Budweiser working overtime to make enough beer for us in Louisiana. Keith was still at LSC and we roomed together off campus. We got into a local crowd of young men and women and had a lot of parties.”

“Then in the winter of '67, I think it was, Beth, that farmer's daughter from South Carolina came down for Mardi Gras with some female pro golfer that Keith fell in love with – can't remember her name. We partied in New Orleans for five or six days, Thursday through Tuesday.”

“Some time after that Keith and I got drunk on a Sunday night and decided to go to Tennessee to get my license plate updated. I was driving and had the pipes open on the '65 Mustang. A cop stopped us as we were leaving Baton Rouge. Keith was a great bullshitter; he told the cop we were going to his Mothers funeral in Chattanooga. The cop told him to drive as I



## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 20**

was too drunk to be in a car much less driving. I remember hearing the car backfiring on I-59 in Mississippi and Jim said he was going 40 mph, but it was actually 4000 rpm and about 110 mph. We sobered up in Meridian, Mississippi and decided to go to South Carolina to see Beth and the pro golfer; they were very glad to see us; we had a full night of sex.”

“After we returned to Baton Rouge, I lost the job; Keith flunked out of school and went into the Marines where he supposedly got one ball shot off. I never believed him; however there was no way to find out without getting very personal. Then in the fall of '67, I think it was, a hurricane came through leaving a flood that left some water in my '65 Mustang. So I sold the '65 and bought a new '67 yellow Mustang. About that time I met my first wife, Sally. I also met and dated this Cajun girl, Monique, who worked for Avis Rental Cars and was a couple of years older than me; damn, but what a bush she had, jet black and wiry. But anyway, Sally and I got married in 1969. She had two kids from an earlier marriage. But even at twenty-six, I wasn't quite ready to settle down, and after nine years we called it quits. During those years with Sally, I bought my first 1956 Corvette for \$850 and a bit later a second one from my cousin in California for \$3500 that was in a wreck. I wound up selling both in 1977 and ordered a brand new 1978 Silver Anniversary Vette, and gave the '67 Mustang to Sally. The cars were just one of the things Sally and I fought about.”

There was a momentary pause as Earle stopped to think back and sort out some events in his mind. The four of them took a sip on their scotches. Two of the three bottles were down to about half, and the third one was still three quarters full.

Then Rafe asked Earle, “So, you left Sally and then what? Did you meet Carlie right away?”

Earle broke out of his recollections and responded, “I'll get to that, but I just remembered a couple of other things that happened during my time with Sally. I found a better job working in a pipe sketching crew. I took up Archery and was competitive - even joined the professional division for few years. I hunted with bow and arrow for five years before killing my first deer.”

Bo interjected with, “You killed Bambi? How could you?” Rafe and James laughed, but Earle just shook his head as if to say, ‘What's the big deal?’ After all he did skin and dress the deer and store the venison in the freezer.

Earle quickly continued so as not to lose his train of thought, “Then in 1975 I made a 23 day 4000 mile round trip across the U.S. to California, Oregon, Washington, the Dakotas, Montana, Nevada, and Colorado. In Colorado, I discovered how good Coors beer was and brought six cases back to Louisiana as it was not available there.”

So, then after Sally and I divorced in '68, I did a job in Virginia and had a blind date with Carolyn. We went to Richmond in the company plane – neither of us was all that impressed with each other on that first date. Despite that we dated for year, and are still ‘dating’! Y'all know the rest; meeting Carlie probably saved my life. I cut down on the drinking and finally got serious about love and family. We had two kids, Lorne and Jenna, who y'all have met. They're off on their own and doing fine. Enough! That about covers it.”

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 20**

“Holy shit, Burn” James declared, “If we write about your life down south before you met Carlie, it will read like a porno novel!” Rafe and Bo laughed and nodded in agreement, and James and Earle joined in. Then James asked, “Will Carlie be surprised at reading about all of that revelation?”

“Naw, she pretty much knows about my life before I met her”, replied Earle. “She teases me once in a while that some of the rebellion we’ve seen in our kids must come from me, because she had a quiet life compared to mine.”

Then Rafe asked, “Just one more question, Burn; do you recall where you were when JFK was assassinated?”

“I was walking across campus at LSC when people started screaming and running around like there was a fire or something and then heard someone run by yelling that JFK was shot. Think it was a Thursday. We had a football game next day and they decided to go ahead and play, but that was the most eerie game – it just seemed like the players were going through the motions, like in practice; and the fans in the stands hardly cheered, like they were stunned or something.”

After a short silence, Rafe said, “Thanks, Burn that was a lot of info about your life in the years when most of us were out of contact with you.”

“You sure sowed a lot of wild oats, my friend”, added Bo.

“Well, that leaves you and me Bo; how about you going next?” asked Rafe.

“Sure, what the hell; my adventures will seem tame compared to Burn’s,” Bo answered.

James added in a somewhat self-placating way, “Damn, compared to Burn’s stories my life after 1961 reads like a monk’s in an abbey!” The others laughed at James’ remark.

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 21**

*Saturday evening, October 6, 2007continued...*

*Still on the upper porch of the beach cottage...*

“Looks like we’ve got a kind of contest going here; Bo, can you relate some stories that can top Burn’s escapades?” Rafe inquired good-naturedly.

Bo laughed, “Ha Ha!” Then he added, “I can think of a couple of things, but I doubt I can match Burn’s adventures.”

“It’s you or I, Bo, and I know I can’t match up with Burn. So you have the gauntlet – it’s you vs. Burn mano-e-mano.”

---

*Bo’s account...*

Bo began, “I’m not one to dig into that part of my past, as far as those years after ’61 are concerned. Some of the memories are too uncomfortable for me. But let’s see”, he said after a momentary hesitation, “You all know about Joan and me getting married in 1963. As Hein said we were married at St Cecelia’s in Ulster Beach; it was Joan’s family’s church. Father Paul was a bit strange. I remember that my parents arrived a few minutes late and Father Paul decided to start the wedding before my parents could be ushered down the aisle to the customary seats in the first pew for the parents of the groom.”

Rafe interjected, “Good lord, I didn’t remember that until my mother reminded me. I was one of the drivers for the wedding and used my mother’s ’57 Ford to chauffer two of the couples who were wedding guests, plus my mom.”

“Now that you mention it, I do remember that”, added James. “Leave it to Father Paul; once he set his mind on something, it was his way or the highway.”

“That’s Right!” Bo responded. “The ushers had to hustle my parents down the aisle, after Joan and her attendants had marched down the aisle and the entire wedding party was already kneeling at the altar rail.” Earle laughed incredulously, having heard this for the first time.

“We had the reception at the Horse Neck Inn. Which reminds me, Rafe recently found a photo from his mom’s effects, after she passed away, of the wedding party at the main table. It showed Joan and me with my brother, Chet, who was my Best Man and Joan’s Maid of Honor at the table. Things went OK for the first five or six years; we had a son, Bo Jr. in 1966 and then two years later a daughter, Melanie. At first I didn’t notice that Joan was drinking a lot more than usual, maybe because I’ve been known to have a few. But it wasn’t so much the quantity that she drank as the reaction she began to have; a lot more emotional changes; highs and lows. Then I started to catch her in some lies. But it wasn’t until I discovered that she had wiped out our

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 21**

savings account (she worked in the bank where we had our account) that I realized she had a problem that needed serious attention. You pretty much know what happened from there; she went to AA and took up with the son of one of our teachers at QHS.”

James interrupted to ask, “Which teacher was that, Bo?”

Bo answered, “Mrs. Barr, who taught History.” Then Bo continued, “So after hiring a PI to gather the evidence, I went to court to get a divorce and custody of the kids. That was in 1971. I raised them on my own and Joan never made much of an attempt to re-connect with them.”

Then Rafe cut in, “Raising your son and daughter by yourself must not have been a picnic; I mean being the father and a substitute mother, must have been somewhat of a hardship.”

Bo responded, “I won’t tell you it was easy; at times I really wondered if I could handle it. But I had left Emerson in the fall of 1963 and got a job for a lot more money as purchasing manager at Queen Vacuum Company. After the divorce, the extra money and vacation time allowed me to hire someone to come in every two weeks and do some of the cleaning, but I still had to do double duty as a single parent. And for a couple of years, 1972-1973, I think, I shared the rent on a house with another guy, who had a young kid. But we survived and I think my kids appreciate what I did.”

Then after a slight pause, Bo said, “But I left out something that might come close to one of Burn’s adventures. After the two kids came along and Joan began to act weird with her drinking problem, we weren’t getting along. In fact we were only having sex together occasionally. Being a young horny Italian I wound up getting involved with a woman from work whose husband worked at nights. Her name was Angela. She had this long blonde hair and was really hot to trot. About one night a week I would make up an excuse to tell Joan, and I would go to Angela’s apartment or meet her at a motel while her husband was at work. I would bang her in their bed and then leave, always well before her husband came home. But as the weekly sex fests went on I began to get a little nervous about it, like maybe I was pressing my luck that either Joan or Angela’s husband would find out.”

Then Earle asked, “So, did you say ‘adios’ then?”

Bo continued, “Not right away. But one night did it for me. It was bowling night at the Quaytown Lanes, and bowling night had become an easier alibi than that I was working late. I was on a team with several guys who graduated after us. You might remember Phil Lucas and Johnny Lambson, they were in the class behind us.” Rafe and James nodded, but Earle shrugged his shoulders, not recollecting the two names.

Bo went on, “So, this one night, I left the bowling alley just before the first game started and the team did what it usually did – took a scratch for me. Well, I get to Angela’s apartment and there’s a note on the door that says, ‘Bo, come on in’. Now the door is not only unlocked, but open a crack. And I started to get this really uncomfortable feeling. I mean, come on, she leaves a friggin’ note taped to an unlocked door?”

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 21**

“No shit!” exclaimed Earle.

Bo nods and goes on, “So, I cautiously push open the door and step inside. As I get into the living room, Angela comes out of the bathroom in nothing but a towel, slithers up to me and puts her arms around my neck. I can tell that she has nothing on under the towel, but I’m still a little concerned about that damn note on the door, so I go back and pull off the note, crumple it up and put it in my pocket – the last thing I needed was for hubby to come home and find that note.”

“Then Angela takes my hand and pulls me into the bedroom and helps me get undressed. Just as we were about to get it on, the front door bell rings and Angela goes out to the front room to see who’s there. I can hear her talking to someone, so I get my naked ass under the bed just in case it’s her husband. Now my heart is beating like a base drum. But it turned out to be a neighbor, a woman in the next apartment, who had gone out to walk her dog and had seen the door slightly open with a note on it. Well, the neighbor’s dog is this little lap dog and it finds its way into the bedroom and starts barking at me under the bed. I tried to kick the dog away, but it just kept yapping at me in a high-pitched yelp. Now, I’m getting nearly frantic – what if the neighbor comes in to get her dog and looks under the bed?” The other three men couldn’t help but laugh at the vision of Bo under the bed.

Bo paused for effect, but he was also sort of re-living the experience. The others were now shaking their heads with amusement. Then Bo went on, “Finally Angela came into the room, scooped up the dog and handed it to the neighbor. The neighbor leaves and Angela comes back and tells me its all clear. I get out from under the bed and get back on top of the bed. Angela drops off the towel and gets on the bed naked as a jay bird and she’s hot; she wants to do it. But I’m lying there saying to myself, ‘Am I crazy for doing this? What am I getting into?’ Angela starts to try and get me hard, but I just can’t get beyond the feeling that this is crazy. So I tell her I just can’t do it tonight. I get up, put my pants and clothes back on, and as I turn to leave, I can see the disappointment in her face. But there was no way! I never hooked up with her again, but still saw her at the office, until shortly after she quit.”

“Wow, What a story!” James exclaimed. “That one is right up there with some of Burn’s.”

“But that’s not quite the end of it”, Bo countered.

“There’s more?” asked Rafe, his voice displaying his wonder.

“Yep”, Bo responded, “after I got back to the bowling alley, Johnny Lambson tells me that I’m in trouble, because Joan had called the alley looking for me and the dumb ass told her I wasn’t there that night. So, Rafe I don’t know if you remember but I called you and asked you to alibi for me, by saying I was with you in case Joan called you to verify.”

Rafe smiled and said, “I vaguely remember that, but she never did call me. That episode definitely should go in the book, Bo. Do you have any more adventures?”

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 21**

Bo reflected a second, then said, “Later, after the divorce, there was this Sales Rep for Queen Vacuum that I met on a business trip to Biloxi, Mississippi, where Queen had a factory. Her name was Marge; she had this horse-like face, but a body that wouldn’t quit. I mean she was built like a brick shit house. One night a bunch of us went out to dinner and then to a bar for drinks. One thing led to another and Marge invited me to her hotel room for a night cap. After some idle chit chat and a couple sips of the vodka she poured us, I put my arm around her, pulled her close and kissed her. I’m not sure exactly how it happened but it was like something inside her was just itching to get out. Almost instantly she became hot as a firecracker. The next thing I know we are completely nude and bouncing off one wall onto another, then rolling on the floor. Then I remember picking her up and setting her naked ass down on the dresser and banging the hell out of her. We fell asleep on the bed and when we woke up we went at it again; god what a night that was!” After a brief hesitation, Bo added, “Too bad the next trip I made down there she was no longer with the company.”

“So, any more escapades, Bo?” James asked with a smile and an encouraging nod of his head? “We still don’t have a clear winner in the contest. I’m still not sure if I should put my money on Win, Place or Show”. That brought a laugh from the other men. They knew James was into betting on the ponies and the analogy didn’t elude them.

Bo reflected a moment, then shook his head and replied, “I know there were some, but I can’t remember enough to retell anything that might add to the book or be of interest to your porno focused minds.”

“Porno minds?” You got that right, joked Earle.

“Yeah, but it was Burn’s episodes that were triple-x rated”, James added kidding, and they all laughed.

Then Rafe asked, “Any interesting stories from other business trips you were on, Bo?”

After a second, Bo said, “There were a couple of trips I made to China and Korea while I worked for Queen. One of the things that really impressed me was the little one-person booths where the person would be assembling things. Some of them had their own little stamping press and would die cut parts for all sorts of machines. Others had like this big tray on a table with a trough cut out on the top and both sides and they would manually assemble small parts into larger parts. The smaller parts were all lined up in the grooved trough and their hands would move like greased lightning to assemble the parts; they moved about as fast as any machine could.”

“These little one-person workshops allowed them to have their own business; they would be paid by a state sponsored or state owned company based on how many widgets they produced. Wages of course were miniscule compared to what we’re used to. It was then that I realized that we here in America would not be able to compete much longer in the stamping and assembly of all sorts of manufactured parts and goods. Once these Asian countries got further

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 21**

mechanized, we could not compete with that low cost of labor.” The other men nodded their heads, acknowledging Bo’s conclusion.

Earle responded, “Seems to me we have already reached the point of losing the edge in manufacturing. I mean look at all the things we import from China and the Far East.”

“Yeah, and we already gave away the manufacture of shoes and sneakers, the steel business, and the clothing business. And over the last five years or so, we have been outsourcing much of the service industry that was the last underpinning of our economy. The information age is going to pass us by and we will be hard pressed to compete with whatever we have left to export”, Rafe added with an angry edge to his voice.

James then jumped in with, “That does sort of piss me off. If things aren’t turned around soon, we will be on a par with most of the third world countries – no longer the leader of the free world. Our kids and grandkids will be the ones who will suffer the most, in my opinion.”

The four men fell silent for a moment, pondering the glumness they all felt. It was Bo who broke the silence, “I don’t know that we can do much about it. It seems like whoever gets voted in for the congress or the administration, Democrats or Republicans, only looks out for themselves. They are about as useful and effective as a boil on a gnat’s ass!” The others nodded their assent.

Then Bo said, “Well, back to my recap for the book. Around 1973 I moved to an apartment in Mason where my kids went to school and later graduated from Mason High; I started dating Phyllis, a teacher from Mason; the kids and I moved in to her house and after a few years we decided to get married – big mistake! Within a year we both knew it was a mistake; what had been a fun relationship turned into a sour one and we got a divorce. We’re still friends, though.”

“I then got an apartment in Mason, where the kids and I lived until 1990, when I bought the condo in Mason where I still live. About 1987, Denise came to work at Queen. She was in the process of getting a divorce and we hooked up and are still together, although we did split up a couple of times. Along about 1989 Queen went out of business and I found a short term job doing consulting for the company that was handling Queen’s demise and bankruptcy.”

“Then in 1990 I got my current job at Omega Wire and Cable. That’s about all I can add for the book. You all pretty much know the rest; after Denise and I got together, there were a couple of times when we briefly split up, but *not* for long! We eventually got engaged about a year before that first time we got together here in Nags Head in 2000. Gee, was that really seven years ago? It just doesn’t seem like it has been that long!”

Then James asked, “Well hell, you’ve been together a long time – what, about twenty years? Are you ever going to tie the knot or are you both still a little afraid that it might spoil things?”

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 21**

Bo thought for a second, and then responded, “Yeah, I guess after two divorces each we both are kind of leery of taking that step again. Not that we haven’t talked about it a number of times. But when she wanted to, I didn’t. And when I wanted to, she didn’t.”

Earle jumped in and said, “Well, hell’s bells, maybe in another twenty years you’ll both agree to do it!” That brought a laugh from all four of the men.

At that point, Bo said, “Well, Rafe, you’re the last one to bring the rest of us up to date with your life between 1961 and 2000. It’s your turn to see if you have some episodes that meet or top Earle’s.”

“Doubtful”, Rafe said, shaking his head while still laughing.



## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

*Saturday evening, October 6, 2007continued...*

*Still on the upper porch of the beach cottage...*

“Now the stallions are into the final turn and here comes Rafe’s horse trying to move up on entries by the Hein, Burn and Bo stables”, intoned James imitating an announcer calling a horse race at the Kentucky Derby.

The others laughed at James’s horse race analogy and Bo added, “OK, Rafe, I’ve got my money on you to win, place, or show. You might say I’m hedging my bets” That led to more laughter.

---

*Rafe’s account...*

Rafe began, “Let’s see; Burn has covered our trip back to college in August of ’61, and James and Bo have covered their weddings. One thing to add to Hein’s account was that his wedding reception was at Ducky Jones hall in Middlebury. I mention it because I don’t remember much about it, except I think I brought Pam Rambler to the wedding and reception.”

James inserted, “Now that I think about it, yeah, you did.”

Earle interjected, “You mean the black girl that was always with that Nathan guy?”

“Yes”, Rafe responded, “I thought I told you that I was interested in her when you dropped me off at Milton College in 1961, on your way to LSC.”

“Gee, now that you mention it, I do recall you saying something about it, and me telling you to think hard about it, what with her being black and all”, Earle replied. “Back then it was frowned upon, especially down South with the racial upheaval in the sixties.”

“It wasn’t just the South and Old Dixie”, James said, “it may have started there because of segregation and the Civil Rights movement, but as the sixties progressed we had race riots in Boston, Watts, and Newark, and other cities north of the Mason Dixon Line.”

Then Rafe continued, “That’s true. But let me tell you about my dating Pam. It all started kind of innocent; it was always in a small group in the beginning, which was along about winter of ’61-’62 when Pam, Nathan, another white girl who worked with Pam and I would meet for casual parties at my parents house or go to one or another of those night clubs in Kingsboro or up in Shayville. At first it was just a group of friends, but then things started to get a little more serious between Pam and me. One night in the summer of 1963, we were making out pretty heavy on the front bench seat of that Hudson I had. I was a bit drunk and realizing how attracted I was to her, yet still trying to get in her pants, I proposed to Pam.”

“Get out!” Bo exclaimed as if it was something he didn’t want to believe.

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

“I swear”, Rafe replied, “I actually asked her to marry me. But she was a lot more sober than me. She handled my proposal in a very dignified way, and turned me down very gently and compassionately. Needless to say, nothing was consummated. I always had the greatest respect for her after that and we remained very good friends and continued to date whenever I was home from college, There was one time at the end of that summer of ’63, before I went back to Milton for my senior year, when Pam invited me to go on a boat ride with one of her co-workers, who owned a thirty foot cabin cruiser. Pam and I sat up on the bow of the boat, as we cruised around the bay between New Jersey and Staten Island. We dated up until the summer of ’64.”

Earle inquired, “What happened then?”

Rafe answered, “After graduating from Milton, I had a degree, but no job and not sure what I wanted to do. All along I had just assumed that I would become an electrical engineer, but I had no prospects. After making Dean’s list my first semester at Milton, I joined Delta Alpha Sigma fraternity and got too involved in the campus Greek scene. I dropped out of football after getting in three varsity games my freshman year. Then I quit the baseball team in my sophomore year; I got benched because I went home for Spring Break rather than stay on campus for baseball practice. So I went from starting right fielder to sitting the bench, and I said ‘screw that’ and quit. I’ll get back to those college years – there are a couple of episodes that may be of interest – but first let me get back to Burn’s question.”

Rafe continued, “So, while I was home on Spring Break in ’64, I went over to Jimmy Barrone’s house; he and I went out for drinks. His sister, Margie, was there; both of them home on break from Glenboro College and both studying to become teachers. His older brother, Tony was already teaching. Jimmy’s dad suggested to me that I should try my hand at teaching. That got me thinking. So, when summer came and I had no prospects I enrolled at Union State College. For the 1964-1965 school year I took evening courses, enough to qualify to teach all subjects at the elementary school level – K through 8. The only thing I wasn’t able to fulfill was student teaching, because that whole time I worked in that brand new Texaco gas station in Mason on highway 43. Hein already told us about working across the street from each other.”

Bo interjected, “So you went back to school for teaching courses and I remember you told us once that you wound up teaching for two years at that catholic school in Holmvale, St. Francis. But why did you and Pam stop dating?”

Rafe responded, “Two things kind of happened at about the same time. One was that Pam and I realized that it was not going to work – it wasn’t just the ebony and ivory thing, we were somewhat Ok with that, but our backgrounds were very different, and although she had been over my house many times and was generally accepted by my parents, my parents always thought that she was Nathan’s girl friend – I never acknowledged that she and I were dating, I thought they might have guessed it. For her part, she had never invited me to meet her parents, so in a way we both realized that it might be difficult in 1964 for both our parents to accept an interracial relationship.”

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

“The second thing was that I met René Tomino. Well, actually I had first met her the day after JFK was shot. My parents had arranged to renew their wedding vows for their twenty-fifth anniversary, on Saturday November 23. They had rented the North Kingsboro firehouse for the ceremony and a party. I got a ride home with Jeff, a fraternity brother. René’s mom worked with mine; her parents came to the affair and brought René with them. She was only fourteen, nearly fifteen at the time, but already well-endowed and looked several years older. But I left the party with Pam that night and didn’t see René again until the following summer of ’64. Hein already told you about the QHS reunion in September, when I had to have the emergency squad take her to the hospital and they pumped out her stomach.”

Earle then asked, “So then what?”

Rafe continued, “We started dating consistently, while she was fifteen, going on sixteen, and both our parents were happy about it. Before long the hormones did their thing and we were having sex every week. She and her parents lived up in North Lima, not far from Newark. Even after I started teaching at St. Francis, I still lived at home – couldn’t afford not to on a yearly salary of \$3800. I did however buy a ’65 Mustang convertible, blue with a white top. We had sex when she stayed overnight at my parents and when I stayed overnight at her parents. Either she or I would sneak out to where the other was sleeping after we were sure that the parents were asleep. I always wondered if they knew what was going on and were too embarrassed to intervene, or didn’t want to embarrass us, or were in denial.”

James inquired with a grin, “And this all started when she was only fifteen? You are lucky my friend that her parents didn’t intervene – you could have been hauled off to jail on a statutory rape conviction.”

Rafe responded, “Never occurred to me, or if it did I blocked it out of my mind. I mean almost from the beginning René and I both felt that it was love, not just hot, wanton sex. It was like we couldn’t get enough of each other. I remember there was one time, after she was sixteen, we borrowed her parents’ station wagon and went down to the beach at Point Pleasant. On the way back from the beach, we came around one of those circles where two of the highways intersected. There was a place off this circle, where you could drive in on a dirt road and into a circular clearing, surrounded by trees. It was a perfect lovers’ lane – a perfect place to park out of sight of anyone. We were both horny as hell – she had her hand slid up my right thigh under my bathing suit with a firm grip on my cock and while steering with my left hand, I was rubbing her at the top of the vee between her thighs. So I drove around the circle again until I could see that no other car would see us, and I drove off the circle onto the dirt road and discovered this clearing; never been there before. It was like an uninhabited island in the midst of those two highways”

“After parking the car and assuring that we were absolutely alone, we dropped the split bench seat on the passenger side, frantically took off the bottoms of our bathing suits and went at it. After we had sex, René decided that she was going to take off her top as well. She got out of the car buck naked, took a beach blanket and climbed up onto the roof of the station wagon and laid down up there on the blanket between the roof racks, with the remains of the sun at about five o’clock streaming down through the top of the trees over the clearing. I could sense that she

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

wanted me to go up there with her and bang her again. But I became apprehensive that someone would come into the clearing. I couldn't imagine that no one else knew about this spot, maybe even the cops. So, I put my swimming trunks back on and told her if she would come down I would find a motel for us where we could spend an hour and after that stop someplace for dinner." The others were all enjoying Rafe's tale, judging by their smiles and rapt attention.

Bo asked while laughing, "So, did that get her to come down?"

Rafe answered, "Yep, but not immediately. It was almost as if she wanted someone to see us that way. And maybe I wasn't all that convincing about the motel; after all until then I had never in my life checked into a motel pretending to be a married couple, and I didn't have the nerve to try it straight up as for what it was. I was sure that any of the entire contingents of motel managers in the area would immediately guess that I was not checking in with a wife. Neither René nor I had a wedding ring. Well, what transpired was I stopped at a decent looking motel up the highway and left René in the car while I went in and registered for a room under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Smith."

"The old Mr. and Mrs. Smith check in routine. I think every motel desk clerk heard that one hundreds of times", Bo interjected, and they all laughed.

Rafe continued, "When the man at the desk asked me how long I wanted the room I nervously blurted out that we would only be an hour, as we just came from the beach and wanted a shower before going out to dinner. The man looked at me as if he obviously knew what this was all about and that just made me more nervous, despite trying to force myself to appear non-chalant. Well, we did go in and take separate showers, although I tried for a joint shower, thinking it would be sexier, but René thought otherwise. She went first and when I finished mine, she was in bed with the covers pulled up just high enough for me to get a gander at the top of her tits. I didn't need any more encouragement! Dinner was anti-climatic – I don't even remember where we ate other than we had packed a change of clothes for a nice restaurant."

James said, "Great story, Rafe; I could just visualize René, as attractive as I remember her, up on the car roof, like a little Eve in the Garden of Eden. Har! Har!" Bo and Earle joined in the laughter.

Rafe resumed, "Well, there is one other story about 'Little Eve'. There was the time after we got engaged. She had graduated from North Lima High and was working in Newark as a secretary and commuting by train. I was teaching at St. Francis and on this one Friday drove up to pick her up at the train station after work. It was a sunny day in May of '66 I recall, about 5:30 PM, and it was still very light out. It had been a week since we had seen each other. After picking her up at the station we decided to park and make out. There was this street a block away from her parents home that dead ended by the railroad tracks which were elevated about twenty feet over a cement wall. We parked the car and started to make out. She was wearing this flowing yellow a-line dress, the kind that had the tight waist up under the boobs and flared out to just around the knees. She unzipped my Khakis, pulled out my cock, and got on top of me. I arranged the bottom of her dress so that it covered what we were about to do. I pulled aside her panties – she wasn't wearing panty hose or nylons – and we went at it with the car bouncing up

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

and down. This was still daylight and there were houses on either side of the street not thirty yards away from where we were parked below the railroad tracks.”

Then Bo asked, “So what happened with ‘Little Eve’ and you? What brought that to an end? It seems like it was one hell of a great sexual romance.”

Rafe thought a second and replied, “I think part of it was that she was emotionally younger than she was physically. René had this romance magazine view on our relationship. She wanted my full attention when we got together on weekends, but in my mind my job as a teacher required me to read and grade papers, before I turned my attention to René. That way I felt I could devote the remaining time on her without the nagging thought that I still had students relying on me to grade their work. Then after she got out of high school and went to work, she was in a more adult situation. Being an attractive Italian girl with obvious charms, she received a lot of attention from the men in the office. I think she began to question whether what we had was really love or just sex, and perhaps she began to feel that she was too young to make a lifetime commitment, especially after the new vistas opened up in the real world. She postponed the wedding and several months later broke off the engagement. I later found out that she had been seeing a divorced guy at work that had been aggressively pursuing her.”

James added, “I remember you were a bit broken up about it, Rafe”.

Rafe responded, “Yeah, I was all set to marry her and then felt like I got jilted. My mom started to bug me about what was wrong and one day I lost my temper and put my fist through the kitchen wall. That’s when I decided it was time to grow up and I moved out shortly after and got my own apartment in Mason. At least it didn’t happen at the altar on the day of the wedding”, he added with a laugh reflecting the fact that he had long since accepted it as a part of growing up.

Then Rafe continued, “That occurred in the spring of 1967 and led me to decide to leave teaching for a job at Wisdom Insurance Company where Hein was already working. That’s where I met Paula; we started dating and married in December of 1968. As Hein mentioned before, he was my Best Man. Paula moved into my apartment in Mason. Within three years we had two children, Jody and Brock and moved to a larger apartment closer to Newark. Those early years were financially challenging and I worked a second job three nights a week so we could afford to save for a down payment on a house. We bought our first house in Montgomery Township with a loan from Paula’s parents, and two years later, in 1973, we moved to Black Rock in north Jersey. Those early years in Black Rock were probably the happiest in our marriage. In 1978 I left Wisdom and got a job at Municipal Life, following Hein who had gone there before me. Several years later I moved on to a job at Webster Publishing Company.”

“It was just after that that I got a call from Hein that he and Lorrie were divorcing. My father died at the end of 1981 and for some reason I can’t recall, I lost contact with Hein. We didn’t reconnect until I tracked him down in 1994 for the 35<sup>th</sup> QHS reunion. I had gotten an email from Don Twigg, who you might remember graduated from QHS two years before us. He told me he was a private detective in Florida. I think it was Martha Luchese, one of the organizers planning the reunion who told me that she thought Hein had moved to Florida. So I

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

sent Twigg an email and asked if he could locate Hein. He sent me back Hein's address and phone number. That's when I called him and he told me he could not set foot in Jersey because Lorrie had a warrant out for his arrest."

James interjected, "Yeah, I remember talking with you and catching up on what had happened with us over those twelve years or so. I think it was your phone number that enabled me to contact you after I settled with Lorrie about the judgment for the additional college costs. And that led to us starting to communicate via email."

Then Bo interjected, "And in 1992 we had that Sports Banquet organized by the QHS Boosters Club. Burn and Carlie came up from Virginia and we saw Rafe for the first time since the Sixties."

"That's when we exchanged addresses and phone numbers and that eventually led the four of us to make the contacts to share email addresses," Earle added.

Then Rafe continued, "Right! But let me get back to my work history. After Webster Publishing I moved on to work for Benson Computer Corporation, where I worked until the recession of 1991. I got caught in the layoff and wound up getting a job as a consultant. I've been doing that ever since; that about sums up my work history. But it was during the seven years at Benson that I began to do a lot of business travel and somewhere along those years Paula and I began to grow apart. Then when the layoff came and both kids in college, things got dicey financially. The stress ate at both of us, while I was job hunting, until I landed the consulting job several months later. In retrospect, I don't think our marriage ever recovered from that." The others nodded their understanding of what Rafe and Paula had gone through.

Then Earle, trying to lighten the mood asked, "But what about those years at Milton? Don't you have stories about your college life?"

Rafe thought for a second, and then replied, "Well, there was a couple of times that I won my fraternity's 'This Week's Lover Award', but I assure you there were a few brothers who won it many more times than me."

Bo nearly jumped up off the bench he was sitting on, "This Week's Lover Award? This Week's Lover Award? I have to hear this story!"

Rafe then began, "First some background on the award: The Delta Alpha Sigma 'This Week's Lover Award' was made from a large piece of red construction paper from which a cutout was made in the shape of a big heart about two feet by two feet. Scotch taped on the red heart was a sheet of lined paper on which would be an entry for each week of the name of the person who was given the award. Whoever got the award was responsible for giving it to another fraternity brother the following week. New sheets of paper were attached as the prior one filled up. So one brother could not win it two weeks in a row, but could win it multiple times."

"The object was to catch a brother in a compromising situation with a coed or a girl from the town, but catch him unaware, so that there was always a bit of mystery at each week's

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

fraternity business meeting. Looking back on it now, I suppose you could think of it like a modification of that old game, submarine race watching, we used to play, where we'd sneak up on a couple parked in a lover's lane catch them having sex or just making out hot and heavy."

"Oh, I get it," Earle said. "So, tell us about why you got the award."

Rafe continued, "One more thing about the award – whoever got the award was obliged to attach it on the outside of the door to his room. So, he was likely to get busted about it by his roommate all that week and by any of the brothers passing by the room. Now, let me get to how I won it the first time."

"On one of the winter semester breaks when I stayed at school a few days before going home to New Jersey, I was down at the local watering hole, Red's, having a few low beers – in those days you could be served beer with no more than 3.2% alcohol if you were 18. I think it was a Thursday night. I wound up sitting at a table with a few gals from the Tri-Gamma sorority and another guy from another fraternity. Now, there weren't too many students left on campus – most of them had gone home. The girls still had curfew and had to be back in their dorms and sorority houses by 11:00 PM. I had been sitting next to this gal who was a niece of a well-known editor at one of the big publishing houses in Manhattan; we were both a bit high and walking her back to her dorm, I could just tell she was ready for a little action. So, I asked her to sneak out of her dorm after she signed in and go with me to my frat house. I told her 'Everyone has gone home and we can go up the side fire escape to avoid my fraternity's House Mother'."

James asked rhetorically, "and then she snuck out and you snuck her into your frat house?"

"Right", Rafe responded. "My room was on the second floor about halfway down a long hall with rooms on both sides except where the bath and shower room was; we quietly walked up the fire escape and into my room. My roommate had gone home for the break and the entire second floor was vacant."

Bo was impatient and asked, "Ok, so cut to the chase, I can almost guess, but what was the award for?"

Rafe hesitated, feeling a little bit like it wasn't in his makeup to toot his own horn about such a thing, and after a pause he said as nonchalantly as possible, "The award was for screwing eight times in five hours." Then he quickly added, "I must have bragged just a little to my roommate when he got back from break, because at the first frat business meeting after the break, my roommie got up and announced it to all of the brothers. Now he had gotten the award just before the semester break, but I can't remember for what."

After the laughter died down, James asked, "So wait a minute, this heart shaped award was already on the door to your room when you snuck this babe up the fire escape and down this hallway. She must have seen it! How did she react? Did she think she was going into the lion's den? Or better yet, did she think she was in for a long night of hot sex?"

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

Laughing, Earle said, "It probably raised her expectations to the point that she was ready to do it all night long."

"I hate to disappoint you all, but I had left the door open and I guided her into the room such that her back was to the door, and then I closed it," Rafe rejoined. "If she did see it, it would have been early the next morning about sunrise, when we left. I walked her back to her dorm, and one of her sorority sisters surreptitiously let her in the side door."

James said, "Well that's a pretty good episode. I put that almost, but not quite, on par with some of Burn's and with Bo's hiding under the bed story. But you said you won that award another time, Rafe. Tell us about that one."

Rafe responded, "It was during Spring Break 1964, the year I graduated. Once again most of the campus had gone home except for a few of us. It was a warm day and another brother with a car drove us out to a little beach along a tributary river that fed into the Ohio River. We had our swim trunks on and a beach blanket. We met a couple of girls and after striking up a conversation we paired off. The girl I met was not a Milton coed; she lived in Milton, but was the daughter of an alumnus from my fraternity. She said she had sore muscles on her back from her job as a nurse. So I offered to give her a back massage and she welcomed it. She rolled over on her stomach and I sat on her straddled on her butt. While I was massaging her back, she said, 'Ah, that feels almost as good as humping', so it occurred to me that I should ask her out, thinking it might be rewarding, if you catch my drift."

"I think we know where this is heading", laughed Earle.

Rafe nodded and continued, "Well, I dated her that night and brought her up the fire escape of the frat house. We had sex in another brother's room on a bare mattress, because the sheets were being laundered. But I found a towel and we walked down the hall to the bathroom and shower room and showered together in one of the four showers."

"Ok, but how did you get the award?" Bo asked.

Rafe answered, "While she and I were in the shower together, a brother opened the shower room door and asked who was in the shower room, I stuck my head out of the shower to let him know it was me, not realizing that he had been in another room on the floor and had seen the gal and I walking down the hall buck naked. Not only that but the shower curtains did not go all the way to the bottom of the shower stalls, and he could see four feet under the curtain. I could tell from his shit-eating grin that he knew I had a gal in the shower with me. So, he was the one that told the previous winner of the lover award and that's how I got the award at the first fraternity meeting after Spring Break. What sort of pissed me off though was that after that brother opened the shower room door, any hope I had of stand-up sex in the shower was gone."

James said with a chuckle, "Great story and I think the Rafe horse has drawn even with the horses from Earle's and Bo's stable. So, no clear winner yet. You got any more college stories or post college stories, Rafe?"



## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

“That’s about it for those years”, Rafe replied with a shrug.

Bo asked, “What about your divorce from Paula and that woman you had a relationship with last year, Rafe?”

Rafe hesitated a few seconds to think about how to respond to Bo’s question. He began, “I still remember our wedding date, December 21, 1968, at a 5:00 PM church ceremony. But I can’t tell you the exact date in August, 2004, when the divorce decree was signed by the judge.”

“Is the fact that you don’t have the exact day of your divorce memorized significant?” asked James. “I mean do you think perhaps you might still love Paula?”

Rafe answered, “No, not that; more like it was one thing in my life I didn’t want to fail at. I mean I still have feelings for Paula – protective, affection, or something – but not love. That died sometime during the last five years as we grew further and further apart. Neither of us were the same people we were during the first 20 years or so.” Then he added, “You know, all of our parents married for the full term; no quitters; no divorces. That was my example, and I believed that it would be my destiny; I *wanted* it to be my destiny.

“When my dad passed away – you know I loved and respected him. But it was my mom who taught me what it is to love. All those years after dad died, she never took up with another man; in her mind there could be no replacement. My dad was not a rich or wealthy man, or a man of power, no great politician or business mogul – just a nice guy, and my mom showed me that it’s not *who* you are, or what things you accumulate, but *what* you are that counts and has real meaning. ...and that’s the way I thought my marriage would be or should be; that I’d marry a woman with whom I’d spend the rest of my days.”

Bo said emphatically, “It was the same with my mom after my dad died.”

James interjected sympathetically, “We know what you mean about not wanting to fail and thinking that when we got married the first time it would be forever.”

Bo added, “Right! You fail and you go on. You don’t give up, but continue to hope that you’ll still meet that special woman with whom you will spend the rest of your life – just like our parents. Look at me. I’ve been divorced twice; and so has Denise. We believe things will get better, because we’ve witnessed it with our parents. Their lives were not all a bed of roses – it was a journey through hills and valleys and they made the best of it through the ups and downs.”

“Ain’t that the truth!” Earle responded. “I feel fortunate to have met Carlie and expect that we’ll be together until one or both of us leave this life.”

After a brief moment of introspection by the men, James said as if he had a revelation, “We were the first generation to enjoy the fruits of a new era of affluence after World War II and Korea. Our parents fought and sacrificed during World War II and we heard all the stories about rationing, the scarcity of food and staples. We listened to the war news from Korea on the radio and at the movies we saw news reels about World War II and Korea. We saw the Hollywood

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

movies that were made about World War II and how America was the good guys – John Wayne movies about Iwo Jima and other battles. We heard all about how the women like Rosie the Riveter went to work in the factories to take up jobs that were vacated by the men who went off to war.”

Rafe then responded, “So what you’re saying is that we’re the first generation to experience the freedom and affluence won by the sacrifices our parents’ generation made, and we were somewhat spoiled because we didn’t have to experience the hardships our parents did. Did that make our generation more inclined to accept divorce and not work out our differences with our spouses?”

James shrugged as if to say he thought it was a good explanation. Earle interjected, “I think James has a point there. But let’s get back to Rafe’s account. I’d like to hear about this woman that Rafe met after his divorce. The three of us didn’t get to meet her at our get-togethers last year, but we did get to see a photo of her; quite attractive, as I remember”

As the others looked to Rafe, he responded, “That would be Sarah; Sarah Williams. We met at a church function in November 2005 and started dating that December. Within a couple of months it led to a serious relationship, despite the fact that just before we started dating, she had made plans to move to the suburbs of Milwaukee to be near family. Sarah was a bright shining light in my life - the months I was with her I felt alive again. We seemed to have a great deal in common and she was the first woman I felt so comfortable with - that I could be very open and vulnerable with. We seemed to get along very well and I did not want to lose her when she moved.”

“But after she moved and I made several trips out to Milwaukee to be with her, she seemed to change. She no longer wanted to keep our relationship going. I couldn’t figure out why she had changed. At times I wonder if she viewed our relationship as just a fling, knowing she was moving away, and never seriously believing that we could make it together over that distance; or that I might follow her to Milwaukee.

“Perhaps she wanted to have something to remember New Jersey by, without any future commitments – I really don’t know the reason, because she wouldn’t open up to be as vulnerable and emotionally available to me as I was with her. I could only go by the feelings I sensed while we were together *before* she moved – that down deep she did want to be with me and wanted to make a commitment, but was afraid that it would become an upheaval to her and the plans she had laid out for herself before we started dating. Sarah had had a traumatic divorce that at the time left her depressed and she told me she had not had a serious relationship in the fifteen years following her divorce. It was obvious that she did not want to be hurt again. So, maybe I pushed too hard. Then again maybe it was just that she came to realize she didn’t really care as deeply for me, as I did for her and didn’t want to hurt me.

“Then again, perhaps it had to do with the hurt she experienced in her divorce; and now that she was back in Wisconsin with her three sons and her grandkids, she wanted to show her ex that she was able to make it without him. She wanted to prove to him and herself that she could be successful despite the pain he put her thru by leaving her for another woman. But that’s all

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 22**

speculation and of much less importance to me. The fact is I really did love her, or at least wanted to, if she would have let me. I wanted to erase that pain from her heart and her memory; and by doing so I could feel whole again and end the loneliness. After a pause, Rafe added, “That’s about it.”

Bo reached over and squeezed Rafe on the shoulder. Earle and James tapped him on the back. Then Earle said, “Thanks Rafe. That’s a lot of info I didn’t know about your life and good material for the book.”

Bo picked up the bottle of Glenmorangie and said as he poured some into each of their glasses, “This bottle has just about enough left for a toast, so we might as well finish it.”

When Bo finished pouring the last of the Glenmorangie, James raised his glass and said, “Here’s to the four of us; we’ve come along way, and we have an even better friendship now than we had back in those beach party days.”

“Cheers!” the other three said practically in unison, as the clinked their glasses together.

Just then Carlie came up the stairs to the porch and announced, “We ladies are tired and we’re off to bed. We hope y’all don’t stay up too long drinking and wake up with wicked hangovers tomorrow, or it will not be a pleasant drive home for y’all.” Then she smiled sweetly and walked back down the stairs.

“Did y’all have enough time to talk about us?” Earle said with a laugh, remembering Ellie’s earlier comment when the four men left the living room downstairs and were about to begin their reminiscences up on the porch.

Over her shoulder Carlie responded jokingly, “Ellie had it right, there wasn’t all that much to say; we spent the time in ‘girl talk’”. The four men laughed knowingly, picked up the scotch, water and glasses, and headed down to the living room.

## Beach Party Days: Chapter 23

*Saturday evening, October 6, 2007 continued...*

*Back in the living room of the beach cottage...*

“Now the stallions are approaching the wire and Rafe’s horse has caught up with the horses from the Burn and Bo stables; Hein’s horse has fallen back and looks to finish out of the money”, intoned James, once again imitating an announcer calling a horse race at the Kentucky Derby. He was of course talking about the conversation the men had had up on the porch, when each had related stories about their lives during the years when they had gone their separate ways.

The others laughed once more at James’s horse race analogy. They had taken seats in the living room. When they had made their way down from the upper porch, they found that the women had all retired, but left the TV on; a football game between Virginia Tech and Pittsburgh was just ending with VT winning by a comfortable ten points. Rafe said, “Well, we killed the Glenmorangie, and we hardly touched the Macallan, but we made a wee bit of a dent in the Burn’s Blend. Personally the Macallan is a bit too peaty for me after the Glenmorangie, so I’m going to have a bit more of Burn’s Blend. Anyone else like a taste of either?”

“None for me”, answered James. “You know me; I was always the slow drinker.”

“And usually the designated driver”, Rafe said smiling at the memories. “How about you Bo and Earle, care for a taste?”

“Yeah, I’ll go another round”, answered Bo. “It will make me sleep better.”

“Just one more, Rafe”, answered Earle after Rafe had poured two fingers for Bo. “I’m driving you two back to the airport tomorrow after we straighten this place up and pack the pickup. We need to bring the beach chair and umbrella back to Carlie’s sister’s place, before we head out.”

While they were sipping and talking idly about how they had all had a great time getting together again, Earle was channel surfing the TV with the remote. He hit on a PBS channel that had one of those music retrospectives on the “British invasion” rock era.

Rafe said to Earle, “Hold it there, Burn, I like this song.”

There on the screen was a taped version of one of the old sixties TV shows with the Hollies singing one of their big hits, “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother”...

*The road is long  
With many a winding turn  
That leads us to who knows where  
Who knows when  
But I'm strong*

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 23**

*Strong enough to carry him  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother*

*So on we go  
His welfare is of my concern  
No burden is he to bear  
We'll get there  
For I know  
He would not encumber me  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother*

*If I'm laden at all  
I'm laden with sadness  
That everyone's heart  
Isn't filled with the gladness  
Of love for one another*

*It's a long, long road  
From which there is no return  
While we're on the way to there  
Why not share  
And the load  
Doesn't weigh me down at all  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother*

*He's my brother  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother...*

As the four men watched and listened, they were suddenly quiet. When the song ended, Rafe looked at the others and asked, “Do you all feel like I do? That the lyrics in that song kind of say a lot about our friendship?”

“How do you mean that, Rafe?” asked Earle.

Rafe answered, “Just think about how we re-established the friendship we once had over forty-five years ago. And how we just finished sharing with each other what happened to us when life had taken us off on our separate paths.”

James added, “I think what it means is that as great as it is to have a buddy to be there when you need support, it is even better to be there for a buddy when he needs support. There’s just no way to describe that feeling of being connected to another human being with whom you have a good deal in common.”

Bo interjected, “It’s that brotherhood thing. It’s kind of unique for four guys to be such good friends when they were young and then to rekindle that friendship after so many years.”

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 23**

“It is about brotherhood, but we’re all talking around the edges, here, I think”, Rafe said. “The point is that when we became buddies in high school and the couple of years following, we looked out for one another – not every day, but often. Just the fact that Hein was usually the designated driver is one example. And there were the times we looked out for one another on the playing field or basketball court or when drinking at Staten Island, or at those beach parties. In some ways you guys were like brothers to me – I don’t know if Burn feels the same way, since like me he’s an only child. We shared the same interests as we grew up through our fumbling teens during a time in America when we all felt safe and far removed from the social and political disturbances in the rest of the world – at least until the turmoil and chaos of the sixties struck America here and abroad.

“But what really brings it home to me are the times we’ve been there for one another during the past seven years, since we renewed our friendship. I can give a great example. When my mother passed away, Bo and Denise helped me in so many ways – from cleaning out the house, to painting the attic and the rooms after removing the wallpaper, and just being there with their emotional support. That’s the kind of thing that that song captures for me.”

“Yes! I follow you now!” exclaimed Bo. “You returned the favor when my mom was dying. You came down to the nursing home and took me out for lunch to help me get my mind off the burden of making those hard decisions, just like you had to make with your mom. And Burn and Carlie came up from Virginia for my mom’s funeral; and Rafe came in from Milwaukee. That registered big with me, because my brother and sister were of no help during the years; I had the burden of caring for my mom all by myself, after my dad died.”

“Yeah! Rafe put Carlie and me up at his home the day of the funeral. And y’all came down twice to our home in Virginia and helped me build those porches,” Earle added. “And Carlie and I had some rough times with my dad and her mom and dad, but y’all kept in touch and offered a sympathetic ear.”

James interjected, “I remember the time Ellie and I came up to New Jersey and I met Rafe at his mom’s house and we went out to Tom’s Tavern to have a few beers. My car had a flat tire and Rafe changed it for me, because I have that pacemaker implant for my heart.”

“Then there was the time that Denise planned a surprise for my birthday,” Bo said. That was another time that Burn and Carlie came up to surprise me. Rafe rented an SUV and we went down the shore and out on a river boat for dinner and dancing.”

“And when I was sick with pneumonia, the three of you called often to check up on me,” James added. “I may not have told you as much, but those calls really perked me up.”

Rafe said, “Then there was the time just after my divorce was finalized and Hein was visiting New Jersey. Bo and Hein took me down to Sea Bright for lunch and drinks to commiserate with me and let me vent. We went to our old watering hole, the Danish Hop, although it’s under a new name now.

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 23**

James responded, "That's because Bo and I had both gone through the emotional turmoil in our divorces and we pretty much knew what you were going through; and on top of that you had been married a lot longer than either of us."

Rafe replied, "Well, it meant a lot to me to know that I had buddies who gave a shit about me at that time. But what probably epitomizes the brotherhood thing and where the lyrics of that song really comes alive with meaning for me was the visit we all made to Kentucky to see Roger and Gladys last winter."

"Oh, yeah, definitely," responded Bo remembering that weekend. "When we heard about his condition we all committed, practically in unison, to schedule the trip down there. I flew down from Newark, Burn drove out from Virginia, Hein and Ellie drove out from South Carolina, and Rafe flew down from Milwaukee."

Earle added, "But Rafe's flight was canceled due to poor weather and he got there a day after the rest of us."

"But it was worth it," Rafe responded. "I hadn't seen Roger and Gladys since just after we graduated high school. I guess that goes for the four of us. It was really great to spend time with them and learn how strong his spirit is in spite of that infirmity. What a great example for me, when I complain about my age related aches and pains."

"That goes for all of us, I think," Bo added.

"And then Roger and Gladys joined us at our place in Charleston last spring," James added. "It was good that they could make the trip. We all took turns helping Roger get from place to place and at the end of the weekend, it was another emotional good-bye."

"It would have been nice if they could have made it for this weekend, but its better that they are going to the Mayo Clinic to see if there is something that can be done to reverse his condition. We've got to keep them in our prayers," Bo said, shaking his head while attempting to voice the concern and hope that they all felt.

For a couple of minutes the four men fell silent, each one reflecting on the what they had just been discussing and what they had revealed to one another earlier up on the porch.

Breaking the silence, James said, "Well, guys, it's getting late and I need some shut-eye. That eight hour drive back to Charleston tomorrow is facing me, and you three have to get back up to Virginia so Bo and Rafe can catch their flights." Then rubbing his hands together, as he was want to do when he was about to make one of his patented humorous remarks, James grinned devilishly and announced, "But before I head off to bed, as the *unofficial* judge of the outcome of the horse race, that is contest, for which of you had the raunchiest life stories...I hereby declare a photo finish with Burn's horse the *winnah* by a nose, and Bo's and Rafe's horses tied for Place. And that leaves my horse coming in close behind at Show." That brought a short laugh from the others.

## **Beach Party Days: Chapter 23**

“What?” Bo exclaimed, still laughing lightly, “I think my under-the-bed story was better than any of Burn’s.”

“No way,” retorted Earle, feigning incredulity. “My wild oats beat your wild oats any day. Besides everyone knows southern gals have it all over those northern gals.”

Bo smiled and said, “Well, thinking back to my business trips to Mississippi, you might have a point there.” And they all had a chuckle.

Rafe interjected, “Hey, I accept the judge’s decision. I’m not sure I’d like for the readers of the book to come away thinking I had the raunchiest history. Let Burn go to the winner’s circle.”

“Oh, now wait a minute,” Earle responded, “I’m not sure I want the honor either, now that I think about it. That could ruin my reputation as a fine southern gentleman.” That brought another chuckle from the four men.

Then Rafe said, “Hein, I have to hand it to you. Once again you injected your unique brand of humor when the conversation became a little too serious.”

“Damn right!” Bo exclaimed.

“So, let’s have one more toast to our friendship before we hit the sack”, Rafe proposed. He picked up the bottle of Burn’s Blend and poured a shot into each of the four glasses.

The four of them raised their glasses and Bo toasted, “To the ‘book’; and to more beach party days!”

Earle declared, “To our health and many more get-togethers!”

James declared, “To our friendship! The Heinrich homestead is available for the next get-together!”

Rafe added, “To brotherhood and my adopted ‘brothers’!”