

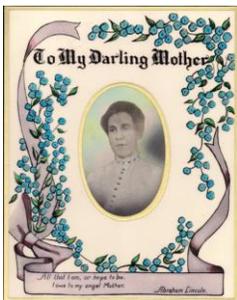
transformed.

“MY Story”

My father was born on February 16, 1911, in Jordan Quay County New Mexico. He was number 6 of 8 children. My grandfather was a farmer. It was a very difficult life. They lived in a very remote area with a very low population of people.



They lived in a dug out when my father was born. There was no running water or electricity. There was not great health care. Two of my father’s siblings died when they were toddlers.



The worst tragedy my father experienced was the loss of his mother. She became ill and suddenly passed away in 1919. She was 44. My father was 8 years old.

My grandfather would eventually remarry but my father did not get along very well with his step-mother. He left home at age 16 and moved into the small local high school he was attending. He worked as a janitor for the school until he graduated. He would return home to help my grandfather with the farm.



After graduating high school, my father left New Mexico and moved to southern, California. He worked at various jobs and then became a Real Estate Agent in Avenal California.

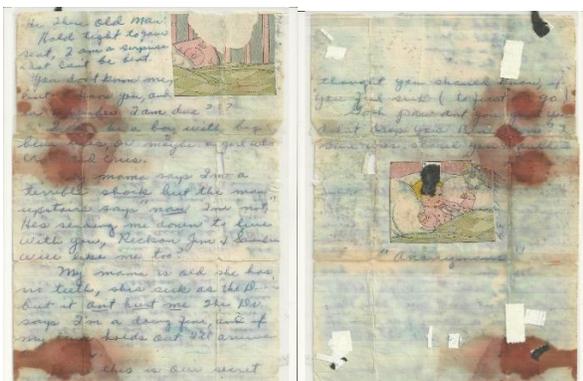


My mother's maiden name was Opal Barnett. She was born June 20, 1915, in Steadman, Oklahoma. She also moved to California after high school. That is where she met my father. They married in 1938. He was 27 and she was 23. My brother Jim was born in California a little over a year later.



When my father was 29, he was hired at Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, Okla., and moved our family to OKC. My sister Sandra was born in 1945.

Nearly ten years would pass before I was born. Before I was born, my mother had been very ill. She was diagnosed with tuberculosis. She was also 39 years old. After my sister was born, she had not done anything to prevent having more children and she thought she was done. When she found out she was pregnant with me she wrote my Dad a letter and put it in his lunch pail.





After I was born my sister said we were the typical happy carefree American family. My father and mother had a good marriage. We lived in a 3-bedroom house my father had built. We attended Kelham Baptist Church. We did things that typical happy carefree American families did. Life was good.



About a year after I was born, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. My sister says it was like a shadow came over our house and it never left.

The last time I saw my mother was at the hospital where she would die. She prayed over me and dedicated me to God.

After a two-year battle with cancer, my mother passed away on Nov. 26, 1958. I was 3 years old. My mother was 43 years old.

The impact that her death would have on my father drastically changed our family.



- My father was a strong man. He grew up working for my grandfather on the farm. To support himself while he was finishing high school, he worked as the high school janitor. He was the captain

of his high school basketball team. He moved to California with just a few dollars during the great depression and made a life for himself. He was a faithful and respected employee at Tinker Air Force Base.

- My father was an intelligent man.
He understood math and measurements. He was skilled in construction. He built his first two homes in Oklahoma. He was skilled at mechanics. He maintained and fixed his own cars.
- My father was an organized man.
He maintained a strict budget and kept detailed records. He maintained his home and kept it in order. His garage was arranged in a systematic way so that he could easily find what he needed. His yard and flower beds were immaculate.
- My father was an honest man.
He kept his word. He was faithful to my mother. He paid his bills on time.
- My father was a wise man.
He saved money and had emergency funds. He avoided foolish investments and foolish friends. He looked for the best buy.
- My father was a happy man.
He was active with his family and with friends. He had a good sense of humor. He enjoyed camping and fishing. He enjoyed playing dominoes and cards. He enjoyed playing sports and watching sports.

But when my mother died, my father was a broken man. He deeply loved my mother. Her death crushed him. She meant the world to him. My mother died the day before thanksgiving. He stayed in bed for days. He could not imagine life without her. He could not imagine every being happy again without her. His life and our home felt so empty to him. He wanted to die with her.

Because he had a 19-year-old son, a 13-year-old daughter, and a 3-year-old son, he pulled himself together and tried to start a new life without her.

There were other major changes in our family after my mother died. My brother Jim got married about a month later. We left the home my father had built for our family and moved to another house on the other side of OKC.

But the greatest change was in my father. He was absolutely lost without my mother. He was hurting so bad and he did not know how to deal with the pain.

Before my father died, he would drink a beer on special occasions. But after my mother died, he started drinking more. This was the beginning of a self-inflicted family tragedy. My father became an alcoholic.

The cloud over our family got darker and darker as his life became more and more unmanageable.

I did not know my father before my mother died. My childhood memories of him are very different from those that my sister had.

Because my father was an alcoholic....

1. I lived with fear.

- I lived in fear because my father became unpredictable and abusive.

There was my sober father and my drunk dad. My sober father had a temper, but he could control it. My drunk dad could not control it. I lived with fear from day to day because I never knew what he was going to be like when I got home, or he got home.

- I lived in fear because my father became dangerous to himself.

He hurt himself several times when he was drinking. He would drink and drive the car. He would drink until he blacked out. After my sister married, I lived in fear about who was going to take care of me if my father died.

2. I lived with shame.

- I lived with shame because my dad's behavior would embarrass me.

Divorce was not that common when I was growing up. None of my friend's parents had been divorced. By the time I was 15, my father had been divorced 3 times.

My father would embarrass me by drinking too much and attending public events.

My father was arrested on several occasions for driving and drinking or public intoxication. When I was 15, my father tried to break into the home of one of his ex-wives in Cordell, Oklahoma. She called the police. He was arrested for disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. He called me from jail and I drove to Cordell that night to bail him out of jail. Two of my friends went with me.

- I lived with shame because I felt guilty for his problem.
I blamed myself.

- I lived with shame because my father would shame me.

When I was 12 my father locked me out of the house to punish me when he discovered I did not want to live with him. He then told me how bad of a son I was for wanting to leave him.

When I was 16 my father shamed me by telling me how immoral I was.

My father shamed me by telling me I was to blame for my mother's cancer.

3. I lived with feelings of loneliness and abandonment.

I was devoid of long term relationships outside of my sister.

When I was in elementary school, in a seven-year period I lived in 6 different homes and I attended 5 different elementary schools.

I had three step moms over a period of 9 years. In each case the day my step moms left was the last day that I ever saw them.

When I was 12, my father started going out on Friday nights and I would not see him again until Sunday evening.

There was no one to talk to about my Dad's problem. I felt like no one knew how bad it was, no one would understand, and no one cared.

I lived with feelings of loneliness and abandonment.

4. I lived with feelings of anger.

As I got older and more independent, all those other feelings turned into anger. By the time I was 15, I was very bitter at my father. I hated him. I also hated God. I blamed God for what happened to my mom and I blamed my father for what happened to me after my mother died. I would visit my mom's grave at the cemetery and grieve over what my life had become and what my life could have been like if my mother was alive. I told God that I did not need Him, and I told myself that I did not need anyone else.

When I was 16 years old, I thought I had fallen in love and I thought the girl I loved had fallen in love with me. But we were both way too young and immature to understand genuine love. The day she broke up with me, the reason she gave me was that I was evil. I was shocked. I considered my father to be evil. It shocked me that someone could think and feel about me the way that I felt about my father.

I rehearsed her words over and over in my mind. "You are evil." I knew I was made mistakes and I was not perfect. But I thought I was a lot better person than most people.

Because of her words, I began to seriously consider, "what does it mean to be evil?" I concluded that to be evil means that you will intentionally injure other people to satisfy your own personal desires.

I concluded she was right. I was evil. I could see it. I could see me. I wanted people to have a good opinion of me, so I did things that would create that perception. But in my heart, I was evil. I was using people to satisfy my own personal desires.

When I acknowledged that I was evil, I concluded I was just like father. And if I was just like my father my life was going to end up like his. No one would be able to stand me and stay with me just like no one could stand or stay with father.

I felt helpless and powerless to change who I was. I could see my life was unmanageable because of who I was. I was evil and because I was evil I would use people.

I began to slowly open the door to the possibility that I needed God to change me. I began to go back to church and really listen to what the preacher was saying about God, Jesus, and what it meant to be a sinner. I began to read the bible to try and understand more about what I was hearing.

On New Year's Eve, 1971, I decided to attend a worship service. The service started at 11pm and was to end at midnight. No one spoke in this service. I received some

instructions when I walked in the door and one of those instructions was no one was to talk. There was either silence or there was instrumental music. The instructions included how to prepare yourself for the Lord's Supper which would be taken at midnight. Part of the preparation was what the Lord's Supper represented and how to know if you were a Christian. The instructions included the promise that if I would receive Jesus, He would forgive my sins, give me a new heart, always be with me, and I would go to heaven when I died. This was good news to someone that lived with fear, lived with shame, and lived with feelings of loneliness and abandonment.

Just before midnight, I received Jesus. I went to the front of the sanctuary and trusted Jesus to save me. A few weeks later I was baptized.

There was an instant change in my heart toward my father. I began to have empathy and compassion for him. But I was still struggling with my old feelings about him. I would still rehearse his faults in my mind and that would stir up those old bitter feelings.

The summer after I received Jesus I shared my struggle with some friends at our church. They told me I had not forgiven my father the way the Lord had forgiven me. They showed me in the bible that God wanted me to forgive him. They then prayed with me.

After we prayed, I forgave my father. I erased his record the way the Jesus had erased mine.

After I forgave him, I believe the Lord told me to tell him that I had forgiven him and that I would love him no matter what he did. In other words, I told him that I had erased the record of his sins and that I would not keep a new one. I also felt that the Lord told me to apologize to my Dad. I knew I had not loved my Dad like God loved me.

The next day, I met with my Dad in our living room and did what the Lord told me to do.

Dad did not immediately say anything in response to me. But something changed in him.



- From that moment on I never saw him take another drink.
- He began to have open conversations with me about things that he was uncomfortable talking about.
- My father started going to church with me. My senior year in high school was a good one for my father and me.

In April of that year, some young ladies at my school decorated the homes of my baseball team before the playoffs.



After seeing this my Dad wrote me a letter. (Read Letter)

For graduation he made me an album and wrote me another letter. (Read Letter)

I went to college, graduated in May 1977, and got married in August of 1977. My father and I continued to grow in our relationship until he died from lung cancer on December 2, 1977.

These verses are my life verses.

[Ps 40:1-3](#)

[1 I waited patiently for the Lord;
and He inclined to me and heard my cry.](#)

[2 He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay; and He set my feet
upon a rock making my footsteps firm.](#)

[3 And He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;
many will see and fear,
and will trust in the Lord.](#)

[NASB](#)

What God did for me through Jesus, He wants to do for you.