

# wHaT tHe LoRd HaS dOnE wltH mE

by Victor Nicholas Hafichuk

## *A Theo-autobiography*

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### The Sword

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to send peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be those of his own household” (Matthew 10:34-36 MKJV).

I am not sent for division's sake;

I do not come to attack;

Strife and debate I do not sow,

Yet all these are found where I go.

I haven't come for evil's sake,

Bearing trouble, sorrow, and pain,

Yet the sword I bear

Will cut in two

And each half in two again.

There are those who wish to take the truth

And claim it for their own.

But others, joined to them, declare,

“If you go, you go alone.”

I cannot help but cause this woe,

If I am to speak what is true;  
I can only hope as time goes on,  
That your loved ones will come, too.

But you cannot wait for them to come,  
The time to heed is now.

Just as you cannot wait for yours,  
The call cannot wait for you.

As friends increase, my enemies mount  
In numbers greater still.

There are very few who know they are sick  
And eager to swallow the pill.

But many there are who take offense  
That the truth should upset their life;  
And hence the division, the sorrow, the pain,  
The debate, the anger, the strife.

But come if you will, take the medicine,  
Be healed in your soul, set free.  
In place of what you leave behind,  
There are far greater things to be.

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# Introduction

“Write down for the coming generation what the LORD has done, so that people not yet born will praise Him”  
(Psalms 102:18 GNB).

“There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed. There is nothing kept secret that will not come to light” -  
Jesus Christ (Luke 8:17 GW).

“I saw the dead, both important and unimportant people, standing in front of the throne. Books were opened, including the Book of Life. The dead were judged on the basis of what they had done, as recorded in the books”  
(Revelation 20:12 GW).

“For what is your life? For it is a vapor, which appears for a little time, and then disappears” (James 4:14 MKJV).

## Particle - **Why My Theo-autobiography**

The story of any human life can have value for others. How much more when the understanding is opened to the inner workings of God? This book is more about His doing than mine - it will be more “Theo” than “auto.” Perceiving that the Lord has worked in and with me for many years, I would like to tell the world about it, mostly with the hope that many others will also be led to believe and be made free, finding fulfillment and peace in the Prince of Peace, Almighty God.

The most important reason to write my autobiography is to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom I have first found to be, then found to be faithful and true, and finally found to be the Lord God and Creator of all. (Don’t allow yourself to be lost now, unbeliever; hang in there; I promise you are in for something very different. You’ll receive fresh meaning on the saying, “You can’t judge a book by its cover.”) I am writing to report to you that He proves His existence and His authority, and He identifies His True Nature in the pages of this book.

## Particle - **What Is This?**

An autobiography is primarily the story of a person’s life. A Theo-autobiography is about two lives in one, separate, yet together. It is the personal recounting of one’s life before becoming a Christian and the struggle and miracle of actually becoming a new creature, a Christian by God’s, not man’s, definition.

A Theo-autobiography is the story of God implanting His nature in a soul, with all the experiential implications and challenges this miraculous process presents to the one being born again. The new creature must contend with the old nature, until God’s metamorphosis is complete. Then the wolf lies down with the lamb, and a new son of God sits on His throne with Him. This all happens in a world of “Christian believers” - be they real, pretend, imaginary, religious, philosophical, psychological, social, political, hot, cold, or lukewarm.

## Particle - **What Can This Book Do For You?**

This book is unique, particularly so. There are precious valuables here for every person, no matter their age, sex, education, financial, social, or marital status, race, religion, experience, beliefs, background, environment, upbringing, handicaps, or whatever other factors may be involved - even death and deadness. Death is no barrier to God; the dead can be quickened by the Spirit of Truth.

*What the Lord Has Done with Me* will:

- Prove the reality of a Higher Power far above us - known as God to most,
- Pique the interest of every reader,
- Surprise and confound many,
- Expose multitudes,
- Cause many to scoff and scorn,
- Cause others to fear,
- Embarrass and alarm several, and even
- Enrage some.

It will do all these things for those who have something to hide, who live in pretense and wish to keep, and possibly forget, their personal secrets.

For others, hopefully many, it will:

- Expose falsehood and break its power,
- Release souls from manmade religion,
- Enlighten with Reality,
- Lift the burdens of guilty consciences,
- Displace despair with genuine hope,
- Instill true faith,
- Encourage people to bring their faults, mistakes, and wrongdoings to the light, and
- Usher them into abundant supply of long-lasting veritable sustenance for body, soul, and spirit.

This Theo-autobiography will bring the reader face-to-face with the realities of life, candidly confessed and reported. It will bring the reader face-to-face with God Himself, if God is willing. It will declare the actual, undeniable works of God. It will publish the naked truth about the author and those close to him, as well as about others. One will see the unmistakable, indisputable sovereign Hand of God on record, proving a Superior Intelligence perfectly concerned about, involved in, and in control of, all existence.

One may see that though the author and others have had favor with God, one man or woman is no different in basic nature from any other in all of history. We are all cut from the same cloth. It is my hope that people will be encouraged with this assurance and brought to freedom by the light of truth, recognizing that they have nothing to fear but God Himself, in a healthy, profitable, and fulfilling way.

It is likely that some will pick up this book, start into it, and drop it, prejudging that it has nothing for them. They may be like a prospector who finds the labor tedious and quits, though gold may lie just inches or feet below him (believe me, it is there). Some undiscerning souls might mistake the gold for iron pyrite (believe me, it is not).

Given the diversity of human nature, it is conceivable that some may read this book and discern very little, like persons at a garage sale picking up and putting down again valuable antiques selling for a pittance (in this case, set in a freebie box). This book, however, is full of something potentially precious for everyone. Whether he or she recognizes it or not, the reader will not walk

away empty. Nobody can walk away from this true story, filled with lessons, principles, counsel, and honesty, and be the same.

It must be acknowledged that there may be errors, notwithstanding every effort to avoid them, in minor details, statistics, names, or spelling of names. The reports are true, however, at least from the perspective of the writer, related as honestly as he knows how and is able.

If anyone finds an error, please let us know; we will appreciate it and take immediate steps to correct it.

### **Particle - Nothing to Be Proud of**

I hang my head in shame. I have absolutely nothing to be proud of. Such a fool have I been in all my ways. Indeed, when I look on mankind, we have all been fools, every one, but I have often seen myself as a principal one.

I have no virtue or greatness in any way, shape, or form. I tell you this in all honesty and conviction. I have achieved nothing. I have not excelled. I have won nothing. I have done no good or noteworthy thing. I have been the proverbial born loser to this very day. I look at my life and, but for the grace of God and what the Lord has done for me, it is a total devastating waste.

I have only one Saving Element and God is It. He has done something with me that cannot be explained; it is impossible to explain away, and it is simply amazing. So I write. I write to show you that He takes dirt in His hand and, by His power and wisdom, makes of it what He will. When He is done, we can only stand in awe of His skill, wisdom, and purpose.

Those who choose to be atheists and evolutionists, beware. Read this book and your beliefs will be entirely without excuse - not because I am, or have done, anything, but because He has, and you will see it.

All those who think they believe will realize how little they believe. And those who truly believe will, Lord willing, be very thankful for this book. They will get a glimpse of the One in Whom they have believed and will be glad, and they may well treasure this book above many.

### **Particle - The Sour with the Sweet**

I look back on many things recorded here with shame and regret. Why do I talk about them? There is a lot of dirty laundry here, along with the precious and wonderful. I talk about my sins, problems, weaknesses, faults, and struggles, to alert others to the fact that these things are common among many.

Also, people are sometimes led to believe that some of these things are not so bad, and perhaps even commendable. It is thought that we should no longer live in a prudish, moralistic age, but in an "advanced, enlightened" one "liberated" of ignorant and oppressive psychological, social, religious, moralistic, and legal handicaps. That thinking is nothing new. In all ages, the lawless have hated discipline and truth.

I wish not to hide anything I should be transparent about. Seekers of life and truth need to know they can also be free, no matter who they are. I was not always the pious believer (if now), much less a preacher. I was not born with faith in God. I was every bit in the dark and corrupt as the next person. And people need to know that the next person is every bit as capable of corruption as I.

I deal with dirty laundry to give hope to those who bear guilt in these things, perhaps thinking there is no hope for them. I want everyone to know that we carry a burden of guilt when we indulge in wrongful things, and we are impacted adversely in every way, perhaps for an entire lifetime and beyond, often without knowing it.

I have learned, and the Scriptures testify very clearly, that we are all corrupt creatures, full of every vile thing possible (and I will prove it). But God, in His chosen time, is quite willing and able, indeed desirous and committed, to redeem and change us for the better, to His glory. He takes care of the dirtiest of laundry, perfectly.

#### Particle - **Names**

The names in this book are not changed to protect anyone, as is so common in many publications. Many names are mentioned, which means that many of these events will be verifiable. It will demonstrate that all people and the things they think, say, and do are more important than they may realize, that all their actions, anywhere, in any circumstance - including those seemingly insignificant ones - do not go unnoticed, forgotten, ignored, unrecorded, or without impact.

Why else mention names, whether relating “good” or “bad”? It is done to demonstrate that there is freedom possible for anyone, such that one comes to fear nothing. It is then possible to talk of these things from a standpoint of victory, and not defeat.

Though I am ashamed of many of these things, I am free of them. Another’s knowledge of them does not threaten me. I want those who are ashamed and threatened by exposure to know they can also be free, and indeed must be. There is nothing to lose but loss itself. Kris Kristofferson’s words in “Me and Bobby Magee” are so true: “Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose.”

#### Particle - **Total Forgiveness for All, None Excepted**

I wish to assure all persons mentioned that I bear them no ill will, only unconditional forgiveness. If one is not prepared to hear the truth about him or herself, he or she will surely be offended by what I have recorded of them; that is human nature. The forgiveness I have for them will only be enjoyed when they experience a true change of heart, which only God can accomplish.

This book is as much, if not more, for the “bad” guy as for the “good.” I want the bad guys to know there really aren’t any good guys when it comes right down to it - lots of self-righteous, pretentious, and religious ones, yes, but good? No, not until God does something with us - and He can, does, and will. Religion has nothing to do with it. Your turn will come, too. In the long run, He isn’t leaving anybody out.

Everyone needs to know that there is no permanent place to hide; exposure and paying the piper are inevitable.

#### Particle - **Children Are Not Children**

Take the time to teach your children and warn them against the things of which I write. The sins of childhood are not erased or forgotten, unless God makes it happen. The evil deeds of our childhood come with us into the future as heavy and cumbersome baggage. There is a Scripture I have found, to my chagrin, to be so true:

“Rejoice, in your youth, young man; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove vexation from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh; for childhood and prime of life are vanity” (Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 MKJV).

Concerning wrong, it is not only a matter of what children do, but also of what is done to them. Adults assume they will get away with what they do to young naïve, innocent children because they don’t understand at the time. Not so! First of all, God knows and requites man for every deed (I know). Be assured, offenses against fellow man, no matter the age of the victim, bring consequences, and the price is never worth it.

Children also have remarkable memories from infancy, and while they cannot understand what is happening at first, there is a very good chance they will remember, and as they grow in knowledge and understanding, they will realize the implications of what happened to them. Through trials in later life, I have received recall of things I suffered from as early as approximately four months of age. Not that there was deliberate evil perpetrated.

I believe that in significant ways, children are adults from the womb. They have far more ability and comprehension than we imagine. Like an acorn that contains an oak tree, children need only develop what is already there. None ought to dare take them for granted at any time.

Particle - **“Despise Not the Day of Small Things”**

On a final note, I want to give the reader what I consider to be an important truth, something that I, at 60, have only recently come to realize. This truth will especially benefit those who have yet a goodly stretch of life remaining, Lord willing. The truth is:

**Appreciate that the big things you are looking for are happening right now, most often in the cloak of insignificance.**

All things happening in our lives are important and serve to form, not only our memories, but also our very character and nature. We do not realize their value or importance until years later. The reason I urge the reader on this is because I have spent my life looking forward to big things happening, and now realize I was not appreciative of the big things as they were happening, judging them to be insignificant.

Our time is very short on earth, because the earth is but a bridge from one realm to another. I tell young people in their teens and twenties, “Tomorrow you will be 60; it will be that fast.” Don’t look for the fulfillment of your imagination or hope of God’s great purpose for your life. His purpose is happening, as you exist, in every moment. Accept it, embrace it, drink it in, attend to it, and yield to it.

Victor Hafichuk

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# PART ONE – Darkness to Light

## *The First Dimension*

### Particle - The Birth of a Fool

My sojourn on earth began on April Fools' Day, 1946, in the town of Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada. The day would come when I seriously wondered if I was not the greatest fool that ever lived.

I was the oldest of four brothers and one sister born to Ukrainian Catholic parents, Nick and Anne Hafichuk. My father's parents' names were Michael and Dora Hafichuk, originally of Sifton, Manitoba; my mother's parents were Paul and Jessie Szmon, of Gilbert Plains, Manitoba. Curiously, I recall that my grandfathers were both about four years of age when their parents immigrated to Canada in the first wave of Ukrainian migration in 1891 from [Galicia](#) of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Some of their roots went back to near Kiev of the Ukraine.

My parents were mixed farmers who rented a quarter section (160 acres) with house and farm buildings from the Cassels of Brandon, Manitoba. The rental fee was a third of the crop produced, if I recall correctly. I'm not sure what would have happened if there had been a crop failure. This property was five miles north of Dauphin, where we lived for my first 12 years.

We also owned a quarter section of land, much of which was virgin and needed clearing from aspens and poplars. We worked hard, were relatively poor, but had all our needs met. I still remember our mailing address as R. R. #1, Dauphin, and our phone number as "807 ring 3" on a party line.

### Particle - Manitoba

Nothing in the universe is nearly as accidental as it may appear, and names of people and places have often had a significance hidden to most. The meaning of "Manitoba," a central province in Canada, would one day be significant to me:

"There are several accounts of the origin and meaning of the name *Manitoba*. The most common story claims the word originated with the Cree words *manitou* (Great Spirit) and *wapow* (narrows) or, in Ojibwe, *Manitou-bau* or *baw*. The "strait or narrows of the Spirit" referred to the narrows of Lake Manitoba. Here, a strong north or south wind can send the waves crashing against the limestone shingles on the shores of the lake and Manitou Island. The Aborigines believed the eerie sound made by the wind and waves was the voice or drumbeat of the Manitou or Great Spirit."  
([source](#))

### Particle - First Tongue

My first language was Ukrainian, and I began to learn English from Raymond McKillop, my neighboring playmate who was four when I was about six. Remarkably, his mother was ardent in teaching him proper pronunciation and encouraged a sizable vocabulary, so I was a fortunate beneficiary.



### Particle - **Good “Googie”**

My mother told me that when I was about three or so, I wandered near a swamp we had in the bush near our house. My mother heard me crying and found that our dog, which I called “Googie,” had a hold of my pant leg and was dragging me away from the swamp. He was not accustomed to doing that sort of thing, so my mother concluded he sensed danger and was protecting me.

### Particle - **Dandled on Priests’ Knees**

There always seemed to be a religious or spiritual dimension to my life. My parents tell me that the priests of our parish would visit us and play with me when I was a young child. They had thought and hoped that perhaps one day, I would be a priest.

“Father” Tapli (I expect the spelling is wrong) was our parish priest, a man well liked. He was later admitted into a senior citizens’ home for priests in Winnipeg. When I was in Winnipeg in my early twenties, Dad urged me to go visit him because he would be pleased to see me; I never did. Young people don’t understand how older people appreciate them. I now wish I had gone, but then, I am older now.

### Particle - **“I Want to Go to Heaven!”**

One evening, as my parents and I were driving home from town, the sun had just freshly set. The remaining rays reached above the horizon onto some distant clouds, which created a beautiful effect, as of a glowing celestial abode. My mother passionately pointed to that unusual scene and said (in Ukrainian), “Look, son, that’s Heaven over there. God and the angels and the saints are all singing and rejoicing!”

That event was quite stirring to me. I knew I wanted to be there, and curiously enough, I knew I would have to die to get there. I would have to lose or let go of everything in this world to have the immense privilege of being with God. This is my first recollection of being made aware of the existence of God and another world. It was a bittersweet experience, thrilling, yet deeply sad. I didn’t know that I would come to experience the reality of it **in this life**.

### Particle - **The Constant Question**

It was an oral birthmark. My mother once said that I came out of the womb with the word, “Why?” on my lips. I wanted explanations for many things, not content with the “what.” I was frustrated many times. Illogical or untruthful answers did not sit well with me. “Because,” was never acceptable; “I don’t know!” or “Go ask...” were quite unsatisfactory.

### Particle - **A Born Barnstormer**

Aunt and Uncle Fred and Mary Prestayko were dairy farmers, living about five miles from our farm. They had an old red barn with a hay loft, the kind some have tried to restore and preserve, during this past half century. It had a slight lean to it due to its age. When I was in my pre-teens, they told me that when I was very young, seeing the lean, I tried with all my might to push the barn over.

While children think, say, and do all sorts of silly and bizarre things, I’ve often suspected there was something of significance to what they related. Maybe not.

## **Particle - Poverty Magnified by a Cruel Christmas**

We were, by some Canadian standards, poor, if not physically, certainly in our minds. My mother made much of our clothing (though she was not a tailor), while she says she went around in rags, sacrificing for us. There were times when all we had to eat was perogies (dumplings made of boiled dough with potato, sauerkraut, or cottage cheese filling).

I remember using Sears or Eaton's catalogue pages for toilet paper. On occasion, we were treated to Japanese Mandarin orange wrappers, which were softer than the stiff, glossy paper and didn't require crumpling into a softer condition before using.

There was a Christmas day morning when we eagerly came downstairs to check the socks we had hung the night before for gifts. To our great chagrin, we found perhaps no more than a half dozen unshelled peanuts in each of our socks.

Did Santa forget? By that time, we had learned not to believe in him.

Were we bad?

My parents said they couldn't afford gifts. Added to the disappointment was the humiliation when we went to school and the other kids were boasting about what Santa brought them. What could we say? "We got six peanuts each"?

## **Particle - The Headless Horror**

When I was about five years old, visiting my Uncle Alex and Aunt Kay Hafichuk, Aunt Kay fetched her axe, a chopping block, and a rooster. Off came the rooster's head and off he took, running headless around the yard. I was astonished, horrified to see this creature able to run around as though it could still think and see; it seemed angry and vengeful! At one point I gulped when it headed in my direction, blood flying, then it turned and ran away, right into a doghouse. The rooster seemed quite alive for a few seconds without a head, though I could not understand how. This killing obviously left an impression on me.

## **Particle - How Powerful Is Pee?**

Also when five or younger, we went to the annual Dauphin Exhibition. We were watching a grandstand performance when I needed to pee. I told my father I had to go, but he was rather occupied with the entertainment. I told him again. He only told me to hold it. "But Dad, I have to go badly!" He was not about to take me anywhere.

As I recall, there were no washrooms. I find that rather incredible to believe now. I dashed out to find some private place to pee. I couldn't find any, and then it was too late. I peed my pants, which were soaked all over the front and down the legs. I was so ashamed of myself. There was nowhere to hide, and I had to wait until the show was over so that we could go home.

That event had a confusing impact on me. Why were there no washrooms? Didn't anybody care? Why would my dad not care? Nothing seemed to make sense, not that I was able to make much sense of things.

Young children do get embarrassed - respect their needs, rights, and wishes. They are sensitive, not necessarily stupid or ignorant of social influences and implications.

## Particle - **Little Things Big**

On a more positive note, a memorable time I had as a child was about two hours I spent with my Uncle Ernie. We sat in a two-ton grain truck in the field one evening, waiting for the combine hopper to fill with grain, at which point he would unburden the combine of its load. While we were waiting, he told jokes. That was one of the highlights of my childhood. I hoped it would happen again, but it didn't. These kinds of special moments happen but once.

Would I tell you one of the jokes? OK, I will. It was about the Three Bears. Papa Bear said, "Who ate my porridge?" Baby Bear said, "Who ate my porridge? And Mama Bear said, "Oh, be quiet! I haven't even cooked any yet!"

I laughed and laughed.

## Particle - **Kindness Is Perpetual**

Take time out for little enjoyments and granting others some kindness and attention, anywhere, anytime. That day was instrumental in motivating me decades later to tell my son bedtime stories he greatly enjoyed.

## Particle - **School Away from Home**

Coming of age to start school, transportation was available from a teacher, Peter Smaliuk, who drove north past our farm from Dauphin to Riverbend School, three miles away. He had a daughter, Lorraine, who also began school that year. (Why "Riverbend"? There was no river anywhere near it. I suppose that was better than "Flatland" or "Bushland" or "Nowhere.")

I remember that first day. It was a hard one. For the first time, I was cast into the midst of strangers by myself, with only a scant knowledge of English. I had to be washed and dressed early in the morning, with the pressure of not keeping Mr. Smaliuk waiting. After all, he was the teacher, and if he was late, it would hold up the whole school, and whose fault would that be?

## Particle - **Home Away from Home**

Mr. Smaliuk ceased teaching at the end of December 1952. For the second half of first grade, my parents decided to have me stay with my father's aunt and uncle, Bill and Anne Atamanchuk, who lived on a half section farm three and a half miles north of us and only a half mile north of the school.

While my first day and first half year of school was hard, being separated from my parents just for the day, the following half year was heart-wrenching. I was very sad the day my parents dropped me off at Auntie's and Uncle's and quite homesick in the days following.

Auntie tried to comfort me. She and Uncle grew fond of me; they had no children of their own. My parents did not visit often, though we were less than four miles away. I don't recall that they even phoned much. I tried to **be** considerate, but I did not **feel** considerate to my mother. I was pretentious.

## Particle - **Firstborn Forsaken for a Few Furlongs**

Looking back to these first years in school, I've now realized some things. There was a school closer to our home,  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles away. Seeing a teacher was driving past our home to another school 3 miles away, I suppose my parents decided to have him pick me up and drop me off on his way to save me a lengthy walk or my father the trouble of having to drive me to and from school.

But when brother Archie began school after my second grade (which is when our parents brought me back home from Auntie's and Uncle's), Archie and I walked to and from the school  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles away, with Dad driving us whenever the weather was bad or other circumstances required it.

So now I ask, "Why couldn't they keep me at home in my first and second years of school and let me attend the school near our place?" If Archie could walk the distance at age 6, why couldn't I have? Didn't they care that they would part with me for a mere  $1\frac{1}{4}$  mile of distance from school? Apparently not. I would much have preferred that to the heartache of being cut off from home and family.

When we received our son (Jonathan), there was no way Marilyn or I would have farmed him out to live with someone else. I would sooner have carried him to school and back in any kind of weather, no exaggeration.

Years later, I asked my mother about this. She said it was Dad's idea, not hers. That may well be, but I don't believe her. Putting together several facts of our relationship over many years, I strongly suspect it was my mother's idea. In any case, they did it, whereas I wouldn't think of doing such a thing with a child of mine. We treasured and enjoyed our son.

Still, I see the Lord's hand in it all; it was necessary as a preparation for the call on my life.

### **Particle - Wrestling**

When Uncle lived in Regina, Saskatchewan, he was a weightlifter or bodybuilder and wrestler. Though he was only about five foot six, he was stocky and powerful, and he knew the holds and moves in wrestling. Nobody in the countryside was willing to tackle him or able to overcome him if they did.

Steve Harasym, a bachelor who lived on the property with us, was nearly six feet tall, 180 pounds, in his late 20's or early 30's, and quite muscular. (Uncle was nearing 50.) Steve continually taunted and defied Uncle in a playful manner, until Uncle finally lost his patience. He grabbed Steve by the scruff of the neck and the seat of his pants and swung him in about seven or eight circles inside their small kitchen while Steve screamed for him to stop. I did not appreciate the skill and strength Uncle needed to do that, until now.

Uncle taught me several wrestling moves and holds, which I found handy with my playmates at times. He would play a bit rough with me, but not too rough. A day came in my later teens when I suddenly overpowered him. He didn't like it. Uncle was quite proud. It saddened me to see the disillusionment or disappointment in his face. Aging is unpleasant to those who value too highly things that pass away.

How these little incidents are not so little, and how they stick in our minds when other seemingly more significant events seem to have so little impact on us!

I recall now that Uncle hobbled. Could he have been injured wrestling? Nobody ever talked about it, and I knew nothing, but for all I know now, he could have seen a chiropractor or physiotherapist and had his hip put back in place. (Years later, I would see him skipping down the road, arms over shoulders with my father, full of joy, both of them just fine!)

### Particle - **Returning Home**

After six months at Uncle and Auntie's, the school year was over, and I had to go home. There went my heart again. While at Auntie's and Uncle's, I was spoiled with treats and attention. They would talk, laugh, play, and joke with me. They helped me with schoolwork. Uncle always wanted to wrestle and playfully tease. While I was lonely for home, I was also happy to have their attention and affection.

### Particle - **My Mother a Witch?**

At home, I did not get special treatment, rightly so. I had a brother and sister, two and three years younger, with whom to compete or share.

My mother was not an affectionate woman. I developed a strong resistance to her; I don't know why. I once angrily said to Auntie that my mother was a witch. Why would a seven-year-old say such a thing? What kind of creature was I?

Auntie told my mother, who cunningly questioned me on it when I got home, asking what I had said to Auntie that was not very nice about her. I could not remember until she told me. I was embarrassed and afraid; I understood nothing but guilt. I suppose some psychologist would say I had been reacting in pain to having been sent away. Perhaps that is true; I have no idea.

Though I would miss my parents and home somewhat, I looked forward to going back to Uncle and Auntie's the next year, where I felt appreciated. Auntie and Uncle missed me, although we all had a hard time showing affection.

### Particle - **Sex Obfuscation**

There was a black side to this time in my life. My uncle was a crude man. He knew every dirty joke and song imaginable, many in Ukrainian, and by the time I was seven, I knew them all. Auntie would often scold him for telling me these things, but it didn't deter him; he would just laugh.

Steve Harasym, who was mentally handicapped, also lived on their farm. He lived in a shack in the bush on Uncle's property. He was also continuously mindful of sexual pleasures, and he did not spare influencing me in a fooling manner. I became a dirty-minded, defiled being. I believe this profoundly affected my relationships with everyone, especially females, for I was inclined to viewing them as sex objects.

Though nothing ever happened, at an early age I was ever seeking sexual relationships with girls, including a girl in my first grade who lived close by, a girl in my third or fourth grade, and my sister, with whom I tried to play "doctor."

### Particle - **Gloria**

Gloria was the girl in grade one with me, the only other person in that grade. People teased me about her. Embarrassed, I got angry and mistreated her. In 1980 or 1981, I saw her in Winnipeg, and she was quite cold to me, after all those decades.

Gloria, I understand; I hurt you. There was never any fault on your part, none whatsoever. Please accept my deepest apologies for the way I treated you. And pass on a warm greeting to your brother Arnold who, very unlike another student in his grade, was always friendly and decent with me. I thank you, Arnold, for that. God bless you!

#### **Particle - Donald, the Draft Dodger**

Uncle Bill divulged family secrets to me: “Your family told you that they weren’t called to join the Army. That’s not true. Your Uncle Don was called to join the Army, and he ran away. I hid him here, in the hayloft, and the RCMP came looking for him. I lied to them. He stayed here until after the war.”

#### **Particle - Gluttony Not a Game**

Auntie and Uncle fattened me up horribly. As an example, for breakfast (at age seven), I would eat half a grapefruit with white sugar, two large slices of homemade bread with butter and jam, a large bowl of Nabisco Shreddies or hot Quaker oatmeal with cream, and a couple of turkey eggs, which were at least twice the size of chicken eggs, washed down with one or two glasses of Jersey whole milk.

For lunch, Auntie would pack me two large sandwiches (four slices of homemade bread), some fruit, cake (there was always cake), and a jar of milk.

Around 8 or 8:30 pm (after chores were done), we would sit down to the biggest meal of the day, which was usually a considerable feast. Uncle egged me on, competing, and I beat him in consumption, though he was well able to pack away the food. Then we would both race for a cot to lay down for a “goodz” (short rest) to let the effects of gorging wear off before going to bed.

Within a year and a half, I went from a normal weight to twice what I should have weighed, from about 50 to 100 pounds. What a shameful thing! The foundation was laid for food and weight problems for many years to come.

#### **Particle - Big Boys Don’t Cry; Little Boys Do**

From Auntie and Uncle’s place, I had to walk half a mile to school. Along that road was a boy in grade eight, Gordon Atamanchuk, who took a distinct disliking for me, and he did not hesitate to show it at every opportunity - teasing, shoving, and generally bullying me. I learned to dread that walk every school day for a year and a half.

#### **Particle - Pudginess, Pee, and Poo**

I believe that one of the reasons he despised me was because I was obese. I also wet my pants frequently, and I even dirtied them on occasion. This made for rather bad relations with everybody.

I was obese, I stunk, and I was hated, defensive, dirty-minded, ashamed, and very lonely in the midst of contemptuous people. And who could blame them? To top it off, my birth date was April

1, and I utterly dreaded its anniversary because everyone was going to make sure I knew they knew I knew I was born a fool. Indeed, I **was** a fool, whether by my doing or no.

### **Particle - The First of My Injuries**

I consider being fed until I was twice my weight the first of the major physical injuries I have suffered in my life. Studies show higher incidence of heart disease and stroke for those who were obese as children, even if not obese as adults. I have heard of other long-term ill effects of childhood obesity as well, like the physiological (not only psychological) propensity to gain weight in later life.

Not all injuries are obvious, and the ones that aren't can be even more harmful than those that are.

### **Particle - Injury Number Two**

The second injury in my life was getting vaccinated. On the whole, this is injury by assault. There is ample proof that vaccinations are a heinous, deceptive perpetration by the pharmaceutical industry and medical establishment on society. Thousands, more likely millions, of deaths throughout the world have been caused by these "precautionary" and "preventative" treatments, not to mention autism, cancer, and many other diseases, in the name of health and wellbeing,.

Research by numerous responsible, educated people, specialists in their fields of health, medicine, and science, proves the insanity of vaccinations, especially to infants. I was injured several times that way, and who knows the effects, if not for God protecting me and overriding the damages.

### **Particle - Injury Number Three**

We were playing baseball; all the grades were involved because the entire school didn't have enough people to make up two teams.

While grossly obese, I was a runner on third base, attempting to make it to home. Bernice Kutcher, a grade seven girl, large and powerful for her age, was catcher. She threw the ball to third base, but the ball didn't make it; my nose stopped it dead. I fell to the ground, bleeding profusely. There was no treatment to be had. Today, they might call 911 and rush a little kid to the emergency room.

There wasn't even sympathy. My cousin, Ed Boyechko, who was a year older than I, went hysterical with laughter. He could not contain himself. "He bled like a pig! Ha, ha, ha! He bled like a fat butchered pig! Ha, ha, ha!" he cried out in delirious delight.

Even the teacher, John Urichyn, got carried away by Ed's outburst of prolonged laughter and glee, and he chuckled along with him; consequently, so did other students. I have often wondered what possessed Ed to be so cruelly pleased with my suffering and misfortune. It was a mystery I would see repeated in him time and time again.

Why do I consider this a major injury? Nobody thought of it as such, but I now realize how serious it could have been. My nose was slightly altered forevermore, even visibly so, and my nasal passages were never the same. This has caused me to breathe through my mouth much of the time since.

It is known that breathing through the mouth is detrimental in many ways. The air is not filtered before entering the lungs, thus the lungs are polluted; the air is not moistened first by the nose, and it is not warmed first in cold weather, which exposes the lungs to injury in hard-breathing circumstances; lips become chapped more easily - the list goes on. Who knows the long-term consequences?

Perhaps I wanted to escape my circumstances, because...

#### Particle - **Peter Pan**

How I wished I could fly away! How I wished I could fly to Never Land! My favorite story in those days was *Peter Pan*. I wished so hard to believe he existed. I once wrote a letter to Peter, and when I wondered how I might get it to him, my aunt suggested I put it on a fence post, so the wind could deliver it. I tried her suggestion, but doubting it would get to him, I went out searching for it. Sure enough, I found my letter in the snow.

*Peter Pan* remained impressed upon me for many years to come. Little did I know that one day I would have something so much greater and better, and **real!**

#### Particle - **III Humor and Cruelty Despise Weakness**

There was a cold winter day on a snow-drifted road when Archie Blahitka came to the Riverbend School with his tractor to pick his son, Larry, up. The Blahitkas lived on Eddy Boyechko's and Gordon Atamanchuk's way, so Archie also gave Eddy and me a ride. I don't recall if Gordon was there as well, although chances were he would have been; he was usually there.

The design of the tractor provided standing room on each side of the driver's seat for one or, if children, two persons. Then there was the option of standing and balancing on the hitch behind the tractor seat while hanging on to the back of the seat. I got the hitch perch.

As we were driving home, Archie began teasing me and loosing my hands from his seat. He and the kids were having a good laugh about it, but I wasn't finding it funny; I protested to no avail. Finally, they succeeded in releasing my grip. I had no choice but to try to jump or fall off while the tractor was traveling. Likely because I was a fat, clumsy kid, I fell on the road, crying.

They were all in an uproar about it. Eddy cried out, laughing, "Ha, ha, hee, hee! He went rolling over and over like a potato!" I don't recall what happened, whether they let me back on the tractor and took me the rest of the way home, or I decided to walk the rest of the way, which wasn't far.

We learn our lessons beginning at birth and thereafter. What were the lessons here?

**One**, don't expect your relatives (Eddy was my first cousin) to stick up for you.

**Two**, don't expect fairness of numbers in any conflict.

**Three**, don't be surprised if you don't receive mercy or judgment from an adult just because you're a young child.

**Four**, don't expect kindness from what appears to be your father's friend, which I assumed Archie was.



**Five**, don't expect any mercy from your ethnic group. We were all Ukrainians, and it didn't matter a whit. The sentiment of solidarity expressed in the common Ukrainian saying, "Nashy Lyewdeh" (our people), only applies when self interests are at play.

**Six**, don't expect your parents to support you in cases of ill treatment.

Not that it should necessarily make any difference, but I was naïve in my early youth, thinking perhaps I might receive some kind of favor because of one of these factors.

It seemed to me that my aunt, uncle, and parents would have much preferred to avoid conflict with their neighbors and friends. I don't recall any support from them in any of the many bullying incidents. I think they may have tried talking to someone, but it seemed they really didn't wish to do anything substantial about my social and physical problems. Perhaps it would have involved making major changes, like taking me back home from Auntie's and Uncle's and sending me to the school in our own area. Better to let me suffer it through, they probably figured. In God's grand scheme of things, it certainly *was* better. I know that now, but it wasn't easy to go through, especially without understanding the goodness of God in evil.

I relate the event as I remember it, being six or seven at the time. Perhaps it was my own fault to a great extent, at least some. Because I was obese, I was a juicy target. I was also likely the brunt of their contempt because I couldn't take the abuse with a shrug of the shoulder. My feelings were always hurt in such cases, and I couldn't conceal them. For all I know, I was a sissy or spoiled brat, thus attracting more scorn, like a magnet draws nails.

I see this ugly part of my life as a conditioning and preparation for the future. All these things were in God's hands. Still, the way I see it is that if ever my son was in such circumstances, I certainly would be moved to do something about it, even if it meant losing favor with friends and neighbors. Indeed, I would never have sent my son away from home to go to school in the first place, if there was any possible way to avoid it. I would have found a way.

### **Particle - The Worst Job Ever**

I'd like to tell you about the worst paying and the most unpleasant job I ever had in my life! I was probably seven years old. Uncle Bill talked me into painting his John Deere manure spreader.

First, it had to be cleaned of dried manure, mud, and dust, which wasn't easy because of the multitudinous bolts, bars, nooks, and crannies around the box, frame, sprockets, chains, and levers. I had no garden hose or air pressure hose to do it. I had a butter knife, wire brush, and likely a bucket of water, rags, and floor scrub brush. After cleaning off every particle of debris, I had to wire brush any rust and loose or peeling paint, and then remove those particles completely. I had no paint sprayer, only a paint brush. It took me days to do the job, but I did it, and Uncle was apparently pleased.

The pay? Three dollars. I suppose board and room counted for something.

### **Particle - My First Memories of Natural Healing**

It was only a matter of time before I contracted poison ivy by romping in the bushes so much. My wrist began to itch terribly and the rash was spreading. We would sometimes use calamine lotion in those days, but there was none on hand. Auntie cautioned me to not scratch or it would spread

further. She didn't know what else to do for me. Then teasingly, she suggested I spit on it. I went away, taking her seriously, continued to spit on my rash, more or less keeping it moist for hours at a time. In a day or two, it was gone. Auntie was surprised. "I was only joking," she laughed.

I recall going to the outhouse and after having a bowel movement, I looked down and found worms in my fecus. I told Auntie. She told me to be sure to eat some dill pickles, which were canned with vinegar and salt. Within a couple of days, there were no more worms.

#### **Particle - Skating and Hockey without Skates or Stick**

My father could never see the necessity for toys or children's activities. If it didn't interest him, there was no point in hoping for anything I wanted. Each winter, the school would pack an area of snow and flood it with water to make a skating rink. While at Uncle's and Auntie's for grades one and two, I wanted to join the kids. Skating seemed like so much fun (and it was), but nobody would buy me a pair of skates.

Later, when someone gave me a used pair, I wanted to play hockey, but I had no stick. I kept asking for one until, one day, Uncle surprised me by making one and presenting it to me. I was ecstatic! But his stick wasn't made to flex or take punishment. I had hardly used it when it broke. Uncle was disappointed when he saw it wasn't repairable, but he never made me another one, and they didn't buy me one, so while I was at Riverbend school, I did without.

#### **Particle - Passing Time Swatting Flies**

I had no toys or playmates while at Auntie's and Uncle's for the year and a half; however, I did have one regular chore, which became a pastime most days during the summer, that being swatting flies at the house entrance so they didn't get into the house when people entered. Manitoba summers produced zillions of flies. In an hour, there wouldn't be a living fly nearby, and the steps, door, and door frame were splattered.

What a way to entertain myself! To this day, when I see flies, I go for the swatter.

#### **Particle - Little Indians and Miniature Trains**

One day Auntie and Uncle drove to the Regina Exhibition with my parents, taking me along. I got terribly carsick, but the Indian "encampment" I saw when we arrived more than made up for that. Living in the days when cowboys and Indians were popular, and being fascinated with the portrayal of Indians in *Peter Pan*, I was thrilled to see Indian boys and girls dressed in fringed tan buckskin, with beaded necklaces, headbands, and feathers. Their skin and eyes were dark, and their ways were different. They seemed to have a wildness about them, capturing my imagination.

While in Regina, we visited Victor Chipley, a relative who built a miniature railroad track around his house and what seemed to me to be an exact replica of a steam locomotive, about a foot high, that ran on coal, complete with smoke, train whistle, and sounds just like the real thing. How tickled I was to see it in operation!

#### **Particle - Money Matters that Mattered**

Uncle and Auntie went to visit the Pshebnicki family. They took me along, and there I met their boy, Jim, who was about my age. He and I showed off how much money we had in our change purses. Using his trade instincts, Jim sold me a tiny keychain for ten cents. It was likely worth one

or two. When Uncle found out about it, he scolded and ridiculed me for being a great fool. This incident haunted me for many years and, I believe, subconsciously affected my financial dealings for the rest of my life.

#### Particle - **A Necessary Preparation**

My time at Riverbend School was a painful one. I was hated by most of the children and plagued by a bully for over a year. Adding salt to my wounds, my cousin Ed, whom I expected to defend and support me, sided with the bully and all the others at all times. Privately with me, he was friendly; publicly he mocked and scoffed at me, falling in with all the rest.

What a strange, perplexing thing! Being constantly betrayed by someone I valued, I was thoroughly battered and bruised emotionally. Ed's laughter and glee at my misfortune hurt far more than the baseball bashing my nose.

**“With his lips the hater makes things seem what they are not, but deceit is stored up inside him; When he says fair words, have no belief in him; for in his heart are seven evils: Though his hate is covered with deceit, his sin will be seen openly before the meeting of the people” (Proverbs 26:24-26 BBE).**

But I now see that these things were divinely purposed. Little did I know God was preparing me for a future calling, wherein these kinds of challenges would not defeat or faze me, though they would be many and constant. The times would come that counted for far more than healthy noses, sympathetic friends, and winning ball games, and I would be ready to suffer for what was important.

#### Particle - **A Mysterious Enmity**

I have often pondered why Ed hated me and was so ready to betray and take a public stand against me without provocation, no matter what the circumstances or who was involved.

I now recount an incident that scared me, which is the only explanation I can think of for his strange behavior. We had a family get-together when I was perhaps five or six. I overheard Ed's mother, Aunt Jennie, complaining to her sister, Aunt Mary, about her marriage and how she and her husband, Uncle Max, were fighting. She spoke of breaking up, which in those days was a much more serious matter than today.

Not knowing any better, I told Ed what I had heard, and I asked him if these things were true. He was surprised, incredulous; I think I saw color leave his face. I believe he was unaware of anything serious happening with his parents. And perhaps his mother was simply feeling sorry for herself and complaining without any real intent to do anything.

The scary part was that, days later, my parents came to me in anger and alarm, as though I had caused or highly contributed to the Boyechko marriage breakdown. They told me that Ed and his brother, Dennis, were living in fear. When his parents would prepare to go out, leaving his brother and him at home by themselves, Ed would panic and cry, begging them not to go. He was afraid he might not see one or either of them again. When they asked him why he was acting that way, he, of course, told them what I had repeated to him. I was told I had a big mouth and was destroying a family! I felt terrible about it.

Ed's parents reportedly assured him they would not abandon them. I have wondered if they told Ed I was making up stories, either to deny Aunt Jennie's complaining of their problems, or to pacify him. Whatever the case, I was made to feel responsible for their troubles by repeating something I had heard his mother say.

Did Ed think I had lied to him to torment him? Was he so psychologically impacted by this incident that his bitterness became a permanent unconscious attitude toward me? That is the only thing I can think of to explain his bizarre behavior toward me, a mysteriously treacherous behavior not remotely duplicated by any other.

I would see, many years later, that all these things were necessary, ordered from above. This experience of classical two-facedness would serve as a foundational conditioner in my life and calling. God was preparing me.

### **Particle - Mother Tongue Forbidden**

The Riverbend country school had anywhere from 15 to 20 students at a time, comprising grades one to eight. Every one of them was Ukrainian or Polish. The teachers were Ukrainian. Everybody understood and spoke Ukrainian. I do not recall anyone there other than Ukrainians and Poles.

One day Ed and I started verbally sparring with each other and were calling one another names. In Ukrainian, I called him an old lady ("stara baba") and he called me the same. The teacher overheard us, called us over, and strapped us.

Why did he strap us? It was not because we were arguing or calling each other names or talking in class. It was not for vulgarity, because there was none. It was because we were speaking Ukrainian. We were to speak English and English only. It was the only physical punishment I ever received in school.

So while the aboriginal peoples of Canada cry foul because they were denied their language rights in school, perhaps people should know that Ukrainians were also denied those rights. And it was Ukrainians who enforced the strict letter of the law against their own language and people. It could be argued that we needed to learn English, the sooner, the better.

### **Particle - Lying and Cheating**

To promote good health and hygiene, a chart with our names was posted at the front, with certain activities listed that were required of us, like eating from each of the four food groups, brushing teeth, washing, and so forth. It was based on an honor system. Depending on our performance, each day we would receive a blue, red, or gold star. I wanted to have a steady stream of gold stars, the highest award.

One day, I believe it was a certain food that I missed having, or I had forgotten to brush my teeth, so I lied when questioned. The teacher knew I was lying, the kids knew I was lying, but I insisted, knowing they could not prove anything. I got my star, but the pleasure in having it was gone, gone, gone.

It is a sad thing that people lose their peace of mind and even their souls - for what? Recognition, honor, respect, pride? Why not be honored for honoring? Are we honoring and respecting our neighbor, from whom we hope to receive honor and respect, when we cheat and lie to him? What

irony! What a contradictory heart beats in our breasts! We are proud creatures, and we stop at nothing to satisfy our pride.

### Particle - “Maybe” vs. “Mother”

Somewhere, somehow, I got it into my head that the word “maybe” was “mother” or vice versa. When I came home for a weekend and told my mother, she tried to correct me, to no avail. I had learned in officialdom by a “real teacher” that “maybe” was “mother,” and who was my mother to tell me differently? I argued stubbornly. I don’t recall how my exasperated mother resolved the issue; I only recall vaguely that she proved me wrong.

What is it about officialdom that causes a child to disrespect and distrust a parent’s judgment and authority or to go against common sense? Is it the way the parent nurtures, teaches, and trains the child? Or are we as children vulnerable to a societal influence that overrides our respect for individual family members, even our parents? Is there no family loyalty, no honoring of parents that comes before respect of strangers? Or are we by nature an erring lot from the womb? Is it all of the above?

Is this how tyrannical rulers take over children and train them to betray their parents, to death if necessary? I withstood my mother over a misunderstanding on my part. What happens when children are deliberately indoctrinated, with lies or propaganda fed them repeatedly when they are young and malleable? I mistakenly believed a simple error, one I was not taught, and I could not be told otherwise by my own mother. How intransigent we can be in error! I think of the quiet monsters created in our public schools with evolution, atheism, humanism, amoral sexuality, and other lie systems.

### Particle - A Confounding Home

Auntie and Uncle Atamanchuk had an 800 square foot bungalow. On the main floor, there were two small bedrooms, a small kitchen/dining area with a chrome and red arborite table with chrome and red vinyl chairs, a cupboard, and fridge. There was also a small adjoining open dining room with a wooden formal dining table and chairs, hutch, sofa, kerosene heating stove, and a tiny enclosed front room/sewing room. This was the main floor of the house, but... we never lived there!

The house had an unfinished basement with painted cement walls and rustic wooden floor. There, they had a large old woodstove for cooking and heating, a cot, a wooden table with bench and four chairs, an open wash area with basin, hanging towel hook, and small mirror; a tiny cupboard with a galvanized steel water pail and common enamel dipper for drinking, a wooden Wabasso crate for firewood storage under the unfinished stairs, some wooden benches along portions of the walls, a large 500 gallon water storage tank, a floor model cream separator, ringer washer, and adjoining closed storage cellar for root vegetables, canning, and general goods. The basement had two tiny windows.

Except for sleeping, that’s where we lived - that was the strange part to me. I can understand why they would choose to live in the cool basement in the heat of the summer, but year round?

### Particle - Embarrassment, Confusion, and Humiliation

The Hafichuk family gathered at the Atamanchuks for some special event, likely Christmas. People were all seated in their basement, with two four-seater backless benches placed end-to-end between the stairs and the main living area. On those benches sat Uncle Bill Atamanchuk and Don

Hafichuk, among others. Their backs were to the stairs, the only exit from the basement. My brother Archie and I were standing quietly against the wall opposite, facing the seated people - just quietly standing there. (I must have been six or seven and he a couple of years younger.)

Suddenly, Archie hit me in the stomach from the side. I was surprised. I said, "What are you doing?" I wanted no part of a spectacle in front of everyone, so I ignored him. Seconds later, he hit me again, this time harder. I looked at him, shocked that he should try to pick a fight with me and wouldn't back off. It was perplexing. I tried to ward him off with a couple of light body punches and leave it at that. He came at me with all he had and knocked the wind out of me. I started crying.

Then I saw a reaction from Uncle Don. I thought he was pitying me, so I began heading over to him to be comforted, but as I approached him, he ignored me and was cheering Archie for being the tough guy. Uncle was laughing and cheering him as well. I realized I was the loser, without sympathy, and quickly passed by the benches and up the stairs.

Slow on the uptake, it was many years later that I realized that one or both of my uncles (likely Uncle Bill) had secretly goaded Archie into striking me while I wasn't looking, for some devilish excitement, I suppose. Decades later, in a dream I had after he died, God would reveal Uncle's cruel nature to me.

#### Particle - **"Wish I Wasn't Born" Birthdays**

My birthday anniversaries were always painful, sometimes physically. On my seventh or eighth birthday, I came home to Auntie and Uncle's, headed straight for the upstairs woodstove, which Auntie *never* used, and put both my hands flat on the surface. Why? I guess I sensed, by heat perhaps, that something was going on with it and decided to prove myself wrong. Auntie rushed upstairs when she heard me screaming in pain, and she began to nurse my wounds with salve and wrap. Both hands were fully blistered.

On another birthday, I ran across a pool of water in the schoolyard and slipped on ice concealed beneath (it was the time of spring melt). Not having a change of clothing, I was stuck with the wet, soiled clothes for the rest of the day. I recall such a thing happening only once, and it had to be on my birthday.

On a birthday, the teacher asked me to come forward to ring the hand bell to start the day. I thought I was being honored. Instead, I was being fooled. I shook the bell...no sound. They had taken the ringer out. They all shouted, "April Fool!" and laughed.

Had I been of a carefree disposition, as some seem to be, I would have laughed, too, but I was anything but carefree. I think I was spoiled and proud and was getting all that I deserved or needed. Also, the Lord was showing me, even then, that observing birthdays was not something with which He was at all pleased. He certainly wasn't pleased with mine. And I never felt comfortable with anyone's birthday party. While I understood nothing about birthdays then, the time would come that I would understand, being informed.

#### Particle - **Turkey Trouble**

Auntie and Uncle kept a bronze variety of turkeys. When I was six or seven, I often teased a hen that sat on her eggs in a shack. She would then come after me, and I would run away. She usually

turned back. One day I crossed the line, and she did not turn back. I panicked, tripped, and fell. She jumped on my head, scratching my face.

My uncle stood watching from inside the barn across the yard, leaning on the bottom half of the split barn door. It seemed like he was not doing anything to help me. I had been asking for trouble, and perhaps he thought I needed a lesson. I have the scar near my right eye to this day over half a century later. I consider that I could have lost my eyes. I did learn not to pester the hen anymore.

#### **Particle - Victoria Comes to Victor**

One day, Auntie and Uncle drove to Angusville, Manitoba to visit some people and took me with them. As we walked, I spotted something on the gravel road. Picking it up, it appeared to be an old coin. When we brought it back to the house and cleaned it up, we discovered that it was an 1891 Queen Victoria large penny. I was excited! Maybe it was worth a lot. It turned out that it was worth very little, especially in its marred condition. The seed of collecting coins was planted, however, and not many years later would bring enjoyment and even bear a modest financial return for a young kid.

#### **Particle - Pride Goes Before Destruction**

We were in Angusville because the eldest son (Lawrence) of Auntie and Uncle's neighbors (the Fydoras) was marrying a woman there. I recall the way they carried on whenever Lawrence dropped by to use the phone to call his fiancée (his family didn't have a phone). He used every love expression one could ever hear, putting Cyrano de Bergerac to complete shame - even Cyrano's swordsmanship wouldn't help. It was unreal. I would later imitate him, and Auntie and I had a good laugh about it.

Lawrence's mother treated him and his brothers as though they were God's peculiar and precious gifts to mankind, raising them to have a high estimation of themselves. The consequences followed. I would find out the tragic fruits of his unreality several years later.

#### **Particle - Art and Me**

Perhaps I sound like a whiner with a victim mentality. I am not sure why I relate some of these unpleasant memories, but somehow I expect they will serve their purpose for others. Whenever I had "good things" happening, those would often find a way of turning sour.

I brought some of my prize school materials home from Auntie and Uncle's, things like pieces of artwork for which I received rare praise and recognition in the midst of a general climate of ridicule and ostracism. I had once copied and colored a picture of a yellow baby duck sitting on a stone well with roof, rope, and bucket. The teacher and students all gathered around, marveling and praising me. How different from the usual it was!

At home, my younger brother Archie and sister Barbara had free access to the cupboard where my personal belongings were stored and destroyed my precious possessions. I was frustrated and angry at my mother for letting them do these things. Obviously, I placed great value on them while she did not. I don't know that I was ever able to forgive them or her for these things until God took hold of my life many years later.

While in high school, I tried building a plywood storage cupboard with a lock on it to preserve my possessions. Archie always found a way to break into it and take whatever he wanted.

I'll get ahead of myself chronologically here for a few moments and tell of another pleasurable art incident in school: I once did an 8" x 11" crayoned abstract when I was about ten or so. The teacher, Mrs. Cassin, gathered the students, displayed my piece to them and my father and even invited other parents to see it.

Why did I not become an artist? I enjoyed it, yet I did not pursue it. I wished that we had more of it in school, but the curricula contained almost nothing in art. I missed it, was not encouraged in it, and opportunities were not provided. It was not given to me to be an artist.

### **Particle - From Hell to Heaven**

When I began attending the Dauphin Plains school, it was a relief for more than one reason. First, the food intake was drastically reduced so that I began to lose weight. I immediately ceased wetting and soiling myself. Second, for some wonderful reason, Gordon Ryz, a boy my age and grade, took a distinct liking to me.

From a "Gordon" who hated me to a "Gordon" who loved me - from "fatty, fatty two-by-four" to "chubby, cuddly Teddy bear"! He was tickled with me! Having his favor, and he being popular, all others seemed obliged or inclined to treat me well.

He was "heaven-sent," like welcome rain on a parched ground, or sunshine breaking up a long, dark, gloomy day. I found it hard to believe and impossible to comprehend, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. We became close friends for a while; I suppose that after the novelty wore off, he became more objective or normal. But it lasted long enough to encourage me on life's road.

### **Particle - Car Trouble**

The Cassins bought a new blue '59 Chevrolet Impala with the "revolutionary" tail fins. In those days there was often pride, at least among kids, as to what brand of car their family owned. It seemed to almost define what kind of person you were. My father was a "Ford man," that is, until his older brother Bill became a car salesman with the Dauphin Dodge-Chrysler dealer, Tibby Munro.

My friend Gordie Ryz's father Frank also bought a new Chevy with fins, and they were proud of their car. Gordie and I had a slightly competitive spirit as to whose brand was better. In those days imports were not common; Ford, GM, and Dodge/Plymouth/Chrysler were the big three. Volkswagen was just breaking into the market, and there was the oddball or two, like Kaiser-Frazer, which somewhat impressed Uncle Fred Prestayko.

With some other kids standing around, I fell into banter with Mrs. Cassin about her car first thing one morning as she was opening the school. "Fords are better," I contended, though I had no clue why. Back and forth we went, until she came back with, "Fords are no better than a tin can with a stone rattling in it." The kids chuckled, and Mrs. Cassin broke into loud laughter. I was stumped and went into heavy duty embarrassment mode, speechless, with face red and contorted... trying to save face, yet losing it.

I felt awful. I deserved it, though, for being disrespectful of elders and authorities. And I learned not to enter into debate or competition with anyone unless I was prepared and knew what I was talking about, not that I always heeded the lesson. I also learned some manners, like not being smart-alecky.



## Particle - Never Invite Yourself Where Not Invited

We all wanted to go out trick-or-treating in our costumes at Halloween for free apples and candy (mostly candy, of course). The problem was living in the country. Who was going to drive miles for a few candies? My dad certainly wouldn't. Who was ready to hand out treats to kids in the country? I so wished I could be in town and go house-to-house until I filled a big bag with goodies.

I found out that the Cassins' older son Larry had invited Gordie Ryz for Halloween night in Dauphin. He would leave with Mrs. Cassin after school that day, stay the night with them, and return the next morning with Mrs. Cassin to school.

I wanted in. I recall being persistent and others hesitant, and finally they let me come. I felt guilty and unwanted, not that there seemed to be any overt expressions from anyone to make me feel that way. It seemed they tried to accommodate me, though not enthusiastically. I felt I was putting a damper on things for them.

We went out that night in our costumes, Larry, Clinton (Larry's younger brother), Gordie, and I. It turned out to be not such a big deal. We got our treats, not nearly as many as I imagined we would, returned to the Cassin home, and went to bed.

I didn't sleep well at all that night. Talk about a fish out of water. I was embarrassed that I had forced myself where I wasn't wanted. While I had my own bed, the covers were strange and uncomfortable, and the room was too warm. It was awkward being in a strange home, having to rise early, and coping with uncustomary circumstances and unfamiliar etiquette. Being introverted and shy, it was a trying experience. It may not have been a nightmare, but close. I didn't think I would ever want to go anywhere again where I wasn't wanted, certainly not for fun or candy.

There was also something about Halloween I was uncomfortable with. I didn't understand what it was, but one day I would.

## Particle - Troubled Teacher

I don't know if anyone knew if it was a nervous breakdown or menopause or simply stress, but Mrs. Cassin had emotional problems. She would have outbursts of anger and would break down and cry in class. I recall my father and other parents trying to have personal talks with her. It was rough on the kids; they never knew what to expect. I think it was because of these problems that Mrs. Cassin eventually left. I saw her several years later, and she warmly greeted me.

## Particle - Smash, Scatter, and Sour the Sweets!

One day, Dad came home from town announcing that he had bought a treat for us. If we were good, he would give it to us later. We did chores, finished supper, and waited until it was almost time for bed. Because we were so very unaccustomed to treats, not even getting them at Christmas, we were eager and impatient, pestering him relentlessly. Suddenly, he rose up, stormed out the door, and returned in a rage. "Slam!" went the door and "Smash!" went the cellophane bag of licorice allsorts all over the kitchen floor. **"HAVE YOUR DAMN TREAT!"** he bellowed.

We sat there, stunned and frightened - but not for long. We sheepishly slipped off our chairs and on to the floor, groveling and crawling in humiliation, gathering the candies.

They were under the woodstove, the table, the freestanding cupboard, and everywhere else. We didn't miss a nook or cranny. There were great balls of fluffy dust, and the candies were mixed in the dust, but we didn't care. We gathered and ate, I trying to swallow with a lump in my throat. We sorrowfully learned the literal meaning of the word "bittersweet." But how much more bitter to the soul than sweet to the mouth!

Why do I tell this story? I see lessons here, not that I was able to take advantage of them until I was granted a new nature to not only learn and practice those lessons, but also to possess their value within:

**One:** That which is pleasing to the flesh is not worth the cost incurred to the soul and the assault on legitimate human dignity.

**Two:** Perhaps it is good not to promise something to children, then delay keeping the promise if it is going to cause strife and torment. Yet does not God try His children, promising first and then taking us through a trial of waiting for the fulfillment? Indeed, it often appears that the opposite happens - that He breaks His promise.

**Three** (the most important one): Do not wrest something from, or press someone for, anything. Be patient and wait. Better not to have it than to get it in an unpleasant way, incurring the giver's wrath.

I dare not press God for things He is not pleased to give me at the present time. Having learned His ways, however, I do have confidence that He will, in due time, gladly give me what I ask without badgering Him for it in unbelief.

Unlike my earthly father, who often broke promises to us and whom we subsequently did not trust to keep his word (which is partially why we badgered him), the Heavenly Father will keep His promise without coercion or begging.

The Scriptural example of the importunate (persistent) widow of Luke 18, by the way, is not an example of badgering. Jesus was speaking not of pestering, but of the sure reward of an indomitable faith and unsundered hope.

#### Particle - **Tearing of Ties, and Tears**

When my brother Archie came of school age, our parents decided that we would begin to attend the Dauphin Plains country school nearly two miles from our home. Leaving Auntie and Uncle's at the end of grade two was a very sad time for me. I would not be returning to my second home and those who had become my second set of parents.

Many years later, Auntie confided to me that she wept bitterly in the following days from sorrow and loneliness. I don't recall perceiving their sadness at the time. I only know that I was very sad, yet I had mixed feelings, too. I wish now that I had had the knowledge and ability to console her then, but I also know that things had to be the way they were.

#### Particle - **Perishing for Lack of Knowledge**

An irony is that children are exposed to these trials of life without the ability, opportunity, or knowledge to deal with them as adults may. The greater tragedy is that adults often lack the ability, opportunity, or knowledge, too, though one would think they should have these

advantages. Or they are unwilling to exercise them, for whatever reason. One day, I would come to possess the Answer to this crippling problem.

#### Particle - **“Mr. Christmas Tree”**

A pleasant memory is of my neighbor friend's (Raymond's) grandmother, Mrs. John McKillop. She took me under wing in third grade and taught me to sing “Mr. Christmas Tree” at school Christmas concerts, while she played piano. For some reason, it was a hit, and they took me to sing at both the Riverbend and the Dauphin Plains schools. People laughed and cheered.

“Mr. Christmas Tree, tell me if you see, a jolly old man passing by, in a coat of red, and my mommy said, he's got a little twinkle in his eye....”

#### Particle - **Rocks in the Harvest**

When I was only eight years old, Uncle Bill got me to help him each fall with the grain (wheat, barley, and oats) harvest. I drove the John Deere AR tractor that pulled the binder, on which he sat and operated. I had to grab and pull the long steel floor clutch real fast to stop us from hitting large rocks hidden in the standing grain, which would have damaged the tractor or binder. One field was particularly rocky, with rocks ranging in size from footballs to two gallon water pails. I had to stand in the tractor all day, being too short to see coming rocks soon enough if seated.

Uncle was very happy and full of praise when I spotted them and stopped soon enough. He was full of anger and curses when I did not. I learned how to cuss very well (why didn't I learn to praise?). It was a serious matter if the binder broke down from hitting a rock. Farmers have only so much time to get their harvest in. A breakdown needing repairs could be very costly, not so much in parts and labor as loss of harvest income.

#### Particle - **First Bible Encounters**

As a young boy of about eight or so, a man came to our country home, selling my parents a large, fancy Catholic Douay Bible, filled with pictures of priests conducting Mass and mostly of Mary and her glorification. I can imagine the fix Mom and Dad were in. They didn't have much money, it was an expensive purchase, but they didn't have a “family Bible”; what kind of Catholics would they be if they didn't buy one? Shame! So they bought it and, as I recall, there may have been some kind of payment on installments.

I suppose that seeing they had an investment now, they felt obligated to make use of it. Dad never took time to read it, but my mother read some to us children. Her attempted interest and reading didn't last long. It was a very unpleasant experience to me; the Bible seemed so boring, so dead. The Bible remained closed, on a shelf, worshiped and hated at the same time, occasionally dusted for the next many decades. I expect it was a torment of regret and guilt to my mother.

#### Particle - **The Imitation of Christ**

I must relate a peculiar event, one that seems perverse, yet I believe it contained the seeds of the call of God on me - I was inclined to identify with Jesus Christ and His sufferings. At the bottom of the stairs, on the main floor, I placed myself against the wall and stretched my arms across the

horizontal wall trim and asked Archie and Barbara to pretend I was Jesus and they were crucifying me. They followed through, play-acting.

My mother saw it and objected, but not strongly. I believe it struck her and caused her to wonder why children would do this sort of thing. The day would come when that bit of play-acting became a spiritual reality.

### **Particle - Comes An Ex-Soldier Helping**

One day a tall, lanky stranger came by our farm looking for work. He, Jim Carson, had been in the Canadian Army in World War II, and when the war was over, there were many soldiers on the road searching for work. My father said he couldn't afford to hire anyone, so Jim worked for room and board.

He was a gift from above to my parents - dependable, capable, cheerful, voluntarily up early every morning to do the chores. He was a hard worker, enjoyed playing with us kids, and had a sense of humor. He was an all around "good guy"; we all loved him.

### **Particle - Brass Tacks, Brash Tactics, and Grass Tackles**

Sonny Dawson, a large, strong, boisterous man, paid Dad a visit. When introduced to Jim and hearing that he had been in the army, Sonny challenged him to a fight. While Sonny was close to 250 pounds, Jim was likely about 190 pounds. Sonny didn't believe all that "nonsense" about how men trained in the army and size wasn't the decisive factor in hand-to-hand combat. So Jim, Sonny, and my father headed out to the pasture.

Jim proceeded to turn Sonny into a sore sack of potatoes, tossed about at will, somewhat mashed. Sonny quickly learned to believe all that "nonsense." My dad was impressed with Jim's skills, and he often told the story with pleasure.

I don't recall how long Jim was with us - two or three years maybe? Years after he left, he returned for a visit while recovering from a serious injury. He had been clearing brush, when the operator of a nearby bulldozer decided to play around. He swung his blade and "accidentally" struck Jim, tearing off a large section of muscle in his upper leg.

Jim was never the same again. I hope things went well for him.

Do accidents happen, or are they caused? Was the man fooling around, or was it intentional? The results are much the same.

This would not be the last time I heard of a man coming home safely from war and getting injured in work or play.

### **Particle - Disease Deals Our Dairy a Devastation**

Our main livelihood was our small Holstein dairy milk production. My father had a quota that provided us with an income of approximately \$200/month, about ten times that in today's figures - not a lot, but we got by. While we also had grain revenues, we had farm expenses to pay as well, like buying machinery and paying for utilities, upkeep, and fuel - expenses not factored into non-farm incomes.

I was likely about nine or so when I was awakened around midnight by sobbing. I got out of bed and headed downstairs to find Mom and Dad sitting at the table with a bunch of papers before them and handkerchiefs to their faces. Their eyes were red and tear-filled. I hadn't heard of anyone dying. I wondered what in the world could be wrong. "Go to bed," they said. But I wanted to know what was wrong, and they told me.

Not that long before, Dad had purchased a milk cow from a farmer some miles away. It would have been good to have her checked out and certified as healthy; as it turned out, she had the dreaded Bang's disease (Brucellosis). The contagious disease spread, and the entire dairy herd had to be put down. There was nothing to salvage from it. It was heartbreaking.

We survived the crisis; they borrowed money, held their milk quota, bought a fresh herd, and continued, but I believe it was a major factor in their beginning to consider another livelihood. Farming as we knew it simply wasn't easy for us.

### **Particle - Isabel's Ire**

Perhaps once every few months, our family would drive twenty miles west to Gilbert Plains to see my mother's parents and siblings. We enjoyed Grandma's bread and donuts, and the variety of crabapples and plums from their orchard in season. We enjoyed going to the Rex Café, where we would buy a dinner plate of potato French fries for 25 cents and share them. We enjoyed playing with Terry, Pat, Linda, Lois, Isabel, and Marlene (my aunts and uncles, three of which were younger and the others not much older than I), as well as with their neighbors, Hope and Daryl Bushie.

There was one day, however, that stands out, and not a pleasant one. I do not recall how old I was, perhaps between seven to nine. We had all piled into my father's '51 Ford. In the back were my grandmother and her daughters, Isabel and Lois. We younger children had to sit in laps. I happened to be sitting in Isabel's lap. She was about three or four years older than I. A strong disagreement arose between her and Lois on the one side and me on the other. I do not recall what it was, but in anger, Isabel took hold of my head and dug her long nails into my face, scoring it and drawing blood.

I have little doubt that I was blameworthy to some extent at least. There was no call however, for marring my face and drawing blood. What made it more unpleasant was that, seated in her lap, I was helpless to defend myself while she attacked from behind. What made it completely unpleasant was that my grandmother did not intervene and would not discipline Isabel for her actions. She simply asked her and Lois some time later to apologize. Isabel and Lois apologized with smirks, knowing full well, and subtly letting me know, that they had prevailed and escaped any consequences. Where were my parents on this? I don't recall.

Isabel ended up having a horribly dark and unpleasant life.

### **Particle - A Father I Could Not Trust**

One day, when I was about nine or ten years old, my father gave me a newborn calf. "Who, me?" I thought. "Wow! My own calf!" He promised that if I fed and looked after it, I could sell it later, and the money would be mine; perhaps I could buy a bicycle or something.

I discovered that it was a sickly calf, perhaps one not worth his trouble nursing. I nursed it, and lo and behold, it recovered and was marketable. When the time came to cash in, he sold it, but

didn't give me the money. He said, "Well, how about the next one? We need this one." Talk about disappointment!

Charlie Brown took another kick at the football, again and again. Each time, my dad, as Lucy, pulled the ball. "The next one will be all yours," he said. I never did get one.

I recall his promising us that if we worked hard all day picking stones in the field, he would take us to the Dauphin Drive-in movies that night. We worked with vigor and enthusiasm, looking forward to the movie and treats. After our hard day's work, my father broke his promise, saying, "I'm too tired, and it's too late." More than once, he did that sort of thing. If confronted, he would chuckle about it as though it was nothing more than a joke.

I believe I have distrusted people in business dealings as a result. After all, if a father's word is worthless, whom **can** one trust? Ironically, he would take pride in, and boast about, how the Hafichuk family had integrity and a good name. What can I say? My father was a liar, traitor, and hypocrite.

### **Particle - No Man Is to Be Trusted**

I recall a Jewish story wherein a father tells his young son to stand on a table and jump into his arms. "Don't be afraid - I'll catch you." The boy jumps, the father steps back, the boy falls to the floor, and the father says, "Let that be a lesson to you. Don't ever trust anybody!"

Jews around the world have been greatly abused as a people, throughout the millennia. Time and time again, they found that the Gentiles could not be trusted for security, justice, equity, and wellbeing. The Holocaust was one major example of many. So they become cynical (or "realistic") and teach their children to beware, always, especially in the face of apparent friendliness and sincerity.

Was it so bad that my father could not be trusted? Maybe not; maybe I had to learn some hard lessons to prepare me for what awaited me in the future.

### **Particle - Small Considerations with Big Impact**

Gordie Ryz's father, Frank, once did some tractor fieldwork for us. I joined him for a while. As I stood beside him while he was driving, he spoke of how one ought to go to the bathroom immediately upon feeling the need - toxic wastes are to be expelled promptly, he said.

Why he told me that, I don't know - maybe I passed gas! I just remember these little times that an adult took interest in me and shared such tidbits. No, the subject matter wasn't exciting, but his consideration was appreciated.

### **Particle - Being Small Pays Big**

Kudos for a moment to other Ryzes, Ernie and Patty, farm neighbors of ours, sons of Lawrence Ryz. One night they played with us and made me laugh harder than I ever had before. How? By pretending to be victims and acting silly when we shot them with water pistols. How we are able to bring happiness to others when we are willing to take the lower seat, even if in play! Of course, they were pretending, but they could have gotten offended or competitive or disinterested instead. That just would not have been the same.

## Particle - **Sharing Multiplies**

That was a memorable night to me. During that same evening, the Ryzes took a five-cent bag of unshelled salted sunflower seeds and shared them with me, Archie, and Barb. We had all we wanted, and I kept wondering when they would run out; they seemed to last and last. I was amazed and thankful.

Things shared go a long way. The power of sharing! I wish I had taken the lesson to heart:

**“A generous person will be made rich, and whoever satisfies others will himself be satisfied” (Proverbs 11:25 GW).**

## Particle - **Toys Weren't Us**

Today, kids have so many fascinating pleasures available to them (as do adults). As a kid in grade school, I had few toys and no TV, computer, internet, Xbox, skateboard, and not even a then-contemporary, inexpensive View-Master. We made our own bows and arrows, spears, slingshots, rubber jar ring rifles, and wooden toys (I think homemade toys are more enjoyable than bought). I also had a small collection of Dell comic books, some bought but mostly given, borrowed, and traded (I enjoyed collecting the *Classics Illustrated*).

Twice a year for two hours or so, we had a visit by a man (Mr. Tyndall, I believe) at our country school to show us films from the Film Board of Canada. How excited we were to rearrange our desks, pull the blinds, douse the lights, and watch educational programs, as well as a main entertainment feature and a few cartoons to spice things up! How different it is today with entertainment centers, videos, DVDs, computer games, and cell phones that take pictures, shoot videos, and surf the web, and more added almost daily!

I have not forgotten one film we saw about a fat boy working in a logging camp. He was perhaps in his early teens. Though he was heavy, he was energetic enough to excel in pillow fights and other forms of physical competition against grown men. He was a sort of hero, admired in general social interaction. It was a humorous film, and I identified with it because I was fat. For once I was not alone, and fat people were not necessarily inferior.

To my disappointment, the film didn't appear to influence anyone toward me for the better. I was learning that personality and attitude counted for much more.

## Particle - **Wright Speaks Right**

Dr. Wright came to the Dauphin Plains school to examine all the children and give us vaccinations. I remember a little piece of advice from him as well. It was to take a good, deep breath of fresh air every morning upon awakening and at other opportune times, as often as I could think of doing it. I think he also advised sleeping with an open window, if possible.

Doctors don't often tell people things like that anymore. I must confess I did not put his advice into habit, but somehow I appreciated his personal counsel and attention. To this day, when I think of him, I take that deep breath wherever I am.

I did wonder if he was giving me that advice because he suspected I had a respiratory problem; there is no record he did, that I know. I do know there were tuberculosis scares in those days and

my father was a smoker. Perhaps he had his convictions against smoking, contrary to the prevailing ignorance and notion that smoking was harmless.

#### **Particle - Bull or No Bull?**

I began herding our cattle through a field to the pasture one day, when suddenly one animal stopped, turned around, faced me, and began to paw the ground. It was a Holstein, nearly a year old. I do not remember if it was a young bull or a steer that hadn't been castrated properly. All I know is that it was now acting like a bull, not a steer.

There I stood in the field with nothing for protection. I looked around for a stone or clod of hard dirt to throw; there was nothing at all - the soil was finely cultivated. Should I face the animal down or run?

I don't remember what I did, but I seem to recollect that I wasn't far from the fence of the yard I had just come from, to which I retreated with all the speed I could muster, not looking back, and dove under the fence. I hoped he was not chasing me, because if he was, I likely would have been through or over the fence, rather than under it.

There was no harm done except perhaps tearing some of my clothes on the barbed wire as I dove under. I realized later I could have been seriously injured, even killed. I told my father about it, and I believe he soon separated the animal from the dairy herd.

I recall someone once saying that she would never write her autobiography because one would have to be a liar to do so. "You can't remember the details accurately," she said. By keeping a journal for part of my life, I have come to understand what she was saying. Our memories are so fallible. This story I just related is true, insofar that I was young, I was taking the cattle to pasture through a cultivated field, a young Holstein bull or steer did stop and turn around and paw the ground, challenging me, while the rest of the herd kept on, and my father did do something about the animal later. But I'm honestly not sure of what I did in the situation. I'm afraid my subsequent imaginations played a part in this. I suspect I had no choice but to stand down the animal, and it turned.

#### **Particle - Spelling Perfection**

I really enjoyed spelling for some reason. I still do. I hoped to be able to spell every word in the English language. I often received 100% in my spelling tests. One day the teacher called me up to the front to receive my graded paper. To my great dismay, I had an error and received only 97%. I could not hold back the tears! The teacher was surprised. "You did very well!" she said. "Why are you so disappointed?" Other children also wondered why I was crying. It wasn't as though anyone beat me; I still had the highest mark. Why did I take it so hard?

We once had an oral spelling contest in school and I was asked to spell "jewelry." Apparently there were two ways of spelling it, the other being "jewellery." I spelled it one way and the judge rejected it. I wasn't aware until later that I was right after all, but there wasn't anyone among us country bumpkins to confirm or deny the judge's opinion. I'm not sure that under the rules, anyone even had the right to correct a judge.

The woes of perfectionists in a world of imperfection!

#### **Particle - Childish Thoughts and Deeds**



Likely from comics, I developed a fleeting fascination for dugout canoes and had the bizarre idea of making my own. I wanted a boat of some kind, and I decided that a dugout canoe would be the easiest and cheapest way to go. How to hollow it and where to float it were other matters altogether - but for a tiny shallow slough my dog once possibly saved me from, there was no water anywhere near.

But I took an axe to one of the biggest poplar trees in our yard. A fifth of the way through, I quit. When my father saw it later, he asked me what was going on. I told him, and he naturally thought the idea entirely ridiculous. He did not seem too alarmed at what I had done (there were many trees), though he did express concern about the potential danger, and what damage and injury could have occurred had I felled it.

I tell this story to express the mind of a child, with the hope that people will try to be patient with children, understanding that they have their unrealistic notions, which they tend to live out.

#### Particle - **My Fourth Injury - Perpetrated through Ignorance**

Here is another travesty of our society, born of atheistic thinking and foolish philosophy. When I was eight or nine, my sister got tonsillitis. To prevent my brother and me from getting it, our parents were persuaded by the doctor to have our tonsils removed. My sister couldn't have hers taken out because they don't remove tonsils when infected, and she never did get hers removed.

God did not give us tonsils as warts or pimples. They have a purpose. Why do men think tonsils are excess baggage? Only because they are ignorant atheists. They know better than God. According to them, we are evolving creatures, not intelligently designed. Or if they believe in God, they seem to think He makes mistakes; He'll have to go back to the drawing board and try again. But He mistakenly deemed His creative works to be good:

**“And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good....” (Genesis 1:31 MKJV).**

Now they are coming around to reassessing their notion that tonsils serve no good purpose. They are discovering that tonsils may be an important part of the immune system, a component in fighting disease. Is ignorance indeed bliss? Just how pervasive and detrimental are unbelief of God and ignorance of His ways and doings?

#### Particle - **Tomato Trauma**

One late summer, we brought tomatoes in from the garden to ripen in the house when frost season came. We laid them out in a spare room upstairs, on a floor covered with newspaper. Out of sight, out of mind - nobody checked them until it was too late. When several of them started rotting, my mother had me clean them out.

The smell was awful. I got so sick, I couldn't eat tomatoes for at least another twelve to fifteen years. For the first few years, I couldn't drink tomato juice or even use ketchup. I slowly edged back to eating tomatoes - first ketchup, then a tiny bit of juice with lots of salt and pepper, then a thin slice of tomato hidden in a big sandwich. It took years to full recovery. I wonder why I tried to like tomatoes again.

Today I enjoy them - as long as they are the homegrown variety with flavor. Most tomatoes today are almost as disappointing as rotten ones are sickening. I enjoy the song that goes, "Homegrown tomatoes, homegrown tomatoes, there's nothing in the world like homegrown tomatoes. There's only two things that money can't buy and that's true love and homegrown tomatoes!"

### **Particle - The Scare of My Childhood**

On the way home from school one cold winter day, someone gave the Chaykowski kids (our neighbors) and us a ride home in a horse-drawn sleigh. Dennis Chaykowski and I sat at the back with our legs hanging over the edge and our feet dragging on the ground. He was six or seven, and I was two years older. I do not recall exactly what happened, but I believe I kicked off his felt boot, which was unlaced and loose. It was immediately retrieved. An hour later we received a call from his mother, Elsie, who was very upset. Dennis was catching it from her for not dressing properly, and he blamed me (rightfully or not) for his foot being frozen.

There was even the exaggerated suggestion that his foot may need amputation. My mother was alarmed, I denied I had done anything but be playful, and I was so very afraid that I had possibly cost Dennis his foot. If that happened, I don't know how I would have lived with myself. I was told shortly after that Dennis recanted, denying that I was to blame, and his foot was fine.

Mrs. Chaykowski once bought me a gift, a cross-shaped IQ pegboard, because one of her children had drawn my name at school for a Christmas gift exchange. The gift was worth more than the limit. She insisted that with the good marks I had in school, I deserved it and should get no less. She also told my mother that she ought to be thankful for me. Wow! That was different.

### **Particle - Southern Alberta Calls**

When I was about ten, Bill and Elsie Chaykowski, with children - Dennis, Diane, and Miles - decided to sell their farm and move to Calgary, Alberta. When they returned for a visit some time later, they gave us a fascinating report. Their income working for someone else was far better than anything their farming had ever earned them. Elsie worked in a cowboy hat factory, which interested me, my heroes being Roy Rogers, Hopalong Cassidy, the Lone Ranger, and Gene Autry. They told us of "the greatest outdoor show on earth," the Calgary Stampede, full of cowboys, chuckwagons, and bucking broncos.

Then there was the weather. Manitoba had unrelenting deep freeze five months of the year, but southern Alberta had warm Chinook winds every few weeks. With this wind from the southwest, temperatures could warm by 20 degrees or more in an hour. The accumulated snow would evaporate, sometimes not having a chance to melt, and people could shed their winter clothing for days. What a welcome break in an otherwise chilly, restrictive, bleak winter! Their stories enthralled me.

I decided that some day I would like to live in southern Alberta, though not Calgary, but somewhere less populated. I thought I would prefer something like Lethbridge, though I knew nothing about it.

### **Particle - Injury Five**

One day when nine or ten, I was in the barn hayloft, dragging 60-pound hay bales over to the hole and dropping them to the cement floor ten feet below, for the milk cows. The hole sneaked up on

me, and I dropped myself instead, landing on my butt, with my legs buckled under me. I don't know what happened to the bale.

My parents were in the barn, but they couldn't easily see me behind the cows and feed bins. Paralyzed, and with the wind knocked out of me, I tried to cry out, but I couldn't make a sound. They soon spotted me, somehow, and rushed to help. My mother and father each took one of my arms and carried me outside for air. I don't know why they didn't pick up my whole body. When they carried me out, upright, by my arms, my legs barely touched the ground, buckled. I was laid up in bed for a day or two, with no medical attention. In the years to come, I would have occasional lower back spasms and sharp pains.

Lessons... don't walk backwards in life? Why does God let these things happen? I was hasty and careless; either one of those can, and often does, bring harm. Did I learn? Maybe, but not that I consciously know. I suppose caution builds into a person through these sorts of incidents.

When I think of the things we suffered and endured without medical treatment in those days, I contrast it to our free Medicare in Canada today; people seem to go for treatment for almost anything. We have learned to be dependent upon, and subservient to, a medical system, which we have abused because free and which now abuses us. Freebies can surely bring bondage.

I discovered over half a century later I wasn't the only one suffering this particular kind of accident.

### **Particle - The Hiding Place**

I think I was about nine or ten when my mother once got so very angry with me. I don't remember why, but she was carrying my infant brother David in her arms while chasing me down the stairs. She slipped, fell, and ended up bruising herself. Of course, I knew I was really in for it if she ever caught me in that anger.

I ran to the barn and scrambled into a hayloft full of fresh, loose hay. I frantically burrowed a hole, crawled in, and covered over the entrance. The chances of her finding me were slim, there being several mounds of hay over an area of perhaps 3,000 square feet. Having left David momentarily at the house, she followed me to the barn and came up the ladder to the loft, shouting and making threats that if I did not come out, I would really be in for it.

I figured, "I'm in for it **now!** I think I like 'later' better." I could hear her searching about, sometimes coming close to where I was, but she finally gave up, parting with, "You just wait till I tell Dad!" I was impressed with my hiding spot - right there in the presence of danger, yet quite safe. I waited there for hours, but all things must come to an end. I finally came out of my hole, bored, tired, and hungry, and timidly sneaked into the house.

I don't recall whether or not I received a spanking, or what I had done that made my mother so angry in the first place, but I do recall that she was not nearly as angry hours later, and I was better off with the "later" than with the "right now." I did think about what could have happened to the baby if mother had tumbled down the stairs with him. I seem to remember that my father wasn't angry either, but mused on the matter.

I never did tell them my hiding place, in case I might need it again, but that was the only time I used it.

## Particle - My First Bicycle

When I was about eight or nine, my mother's father, Paul Szmon, decided to give me a girl's balloon tire Schwinn bike. He could have let his own children have it - there were at least six of them that could have used it. Perhaps he gave it to me because I was the firstborn of his firstborn, I don't know. Another possible reason could have been that we lived in the country, while they lived in the village (Gilbert Plains), so they thought I could use it for school, which was nearly two miles away. I was tickled!

## Particle - The Veribest Specialty Company

It was not long before I put my bike to commercial use. I bought myself a carrier to attach to the handlebars and began ordering merchandise at wholesale from the Veribest Specialty Company in Toronto. A kid could buy a box of goods for \$30 and sell it for \$45 or so. There were greeting cards, garden seeds, and Zippo, a powdered drink like Freshie or Kool-Aid. It had a distinct taste that some either liked or disliked.

I would head south all the way to Dauphin and back, five miles away, selling only to farms (I was told we didn't have a license to sell in town); north three miles to my aunt and uncle's, east about five miles, and west six miles to Uncle Fred and Aunt Mary Prestayko's (almost all on gravel roads). I would spend the night with the Prestaykos and usually come home the next day. As in anything, there were farmers who filled the spectrum, from friendly and accommodating to disinterested and dismissive. Some were generous in spirit and pocket, while others were quite miserly.

It did not occur to me until years later that perhaps my parents' relationship with the neighbors had something to do with how they reacted to me. Most farmers had dogs, and while most dogs were playful and friendly, some could get rather scary, growling viciously, baring their fangs, and snapping at my legs. (There was no pepper spray in those days!)

I learned about people, their reactions, motivations, and attitudes, and I marveled at the differences.

With my earnings, I enjoyed buying equipment for my bike - a better carrier, new seat, battery-operated horn or light - and other things, like a baseball glove.

## Particle - "Do Unto Others..."

One day, Raymond McKillop and I were racing our bikes to school. I had my girl's balloon tire Schwinn, a "Cadillac on one cylinder," while he had his new CCM three-speed. I could barely keep up and, at some point, I got aggressive, as if to force him off the rutted road. Our handlebars locked and I suddenly, as if by magic, found myself in the ditch on the opposite side of Raymond in prickly rosebushes, momentarily unconscious, with my bike on top of me.

When I came to, I saw Raymond quietly standing on the road with his bike, affected within, but not without. I had no idea what had happened - everything happened so fast. It seems to me, though, that I would have had to go flying over him to hit his side of the ditch.

Was there a lesson? Yes, even then I knew it, instinctively, reluctantly. "Try to do harm to another, and you will harm yourself." Although I was not trying to harm him, I was trying to force him to yield the race, in what could be a dangerous move.

## **Particle - A Family of Friendlies and Formidables**

About three miles north of us lived a man with five or more sons. His wife had passed away, I believe, leaving behind some very interesting boys. While I was slightly acquainted with the youngest, Tom, his brothers were considerably older. Sam, the oldest, did some work for my father. He was friendly, playful, cheerful, hardworking, enthusiastic, and just great to be around. He reminds me of Dean Martin - easy going, fun loving, funny, and a bit of a drinker (not that Dean was a drinker - I really don't know).

Then there were two other brothers who joined the RCMP. They left the force - I don't know if they were kicked out or decided to quit - but they did not leave behind their training skills. They would get very drunk and in the wee hours of the morning, head to the Dauphin Bus Depot for a bite to eat or a brawl, the place being open at all hours for bus travelers and local revelers. There they would start a ruckus that necessitated police intervention.

The police, however, had a big problem. One or two would come, only to discover they needed backup against the Corneliuk boys. Backup would come only to find they couldn't help much. Pete and his brother would take four or five RCMP officers on at once and use them for wallpaper or for parking meter wrap (so I heard). Pete was a big, powerful man. They knew techniques and effectively used them against the constables.

The fighting and stories of the Corneliuk exploits fascinated me, but there was more to it. They were Ukrainian! With the mentality I inherited from my parents about our ethnic heritage, which seemed to consist of a good dose of low self-esteem, I wondered where they got the nerve to challenge society that way, even the law, drunk or sober.

## **Particle - What Kind of Ukrainians?**

The Corneliuks seemed to have confidence in spite of the fact that they were common farmers and Ukrainians; they had Ukrainian accents and didn't seem to have a lot of anything special going for them. How could they feel so self-assured and comfortable in their social relationships with Anglo-Saxons, business people, politicians, and others?

Other Ukrainians seemed to have this self-confidence as well: Dr. Potoski was a medical doctor. John Lysak was the Dauphin General Hospital administrator. Fred Zaplitny was an apparently successful politician, representing Dauphin for years. I sat in class with his son, Rick, who became a chartered accountant, someone who seemed quite adjusted socially, with the in-crowd, in spite of the fact that he lost his father early in his life to heart disease. Rick's pal, Mike Ohryn, also seemed to get along.

There were the Wojtyshen twins, Steve and Sid, who were quite extroverted, even brazen in their ways, and popular. Ed Toporowski, our farm neighbor, who lost his father early in life, became a country and western DJ at CKDM, the local radio station. Years later, Laverne Lewycky was elected as Dauphin district's representative to Ottawa as a Member of Parliament. The local dentists were Ukrainian - Steve and Orville Heschuk.

Citing someone out of the province for a greater example, Saskatchewanite Ukrainian, Ray Hnatyshyn, served as Governor General of Canada for a term.

There were many examples I recall.

Today, they continue, of course - Randy Bachman, former lead and vocalist for The Guess Who, and now the host of a popular CBC radio program Saturday nights; and Alex Trebek, host of CTV's longstanding show, *Jeopardy*.

Internationally, Mikhail Gorbachev was a Ukrainian peasant who ended up as the leader of a superpower, the Soviet Union, and changed the world!

How is it that they, as Ukrainians, could have such confidence and sense of equality with others? I did not have it. I was insecure and simply did not ever feel that I measured up to the general populace. We were poor Ukrainian farmers, and that made me less. Why?

### **Particle - Contempt for Others Breeds Self-Contempt**

I think I know why. My parents felt that way and passed it on. My mother told us of how she and her siblings were looked down upon and scorned by the English in her village (Gilbert Plains) as "DPs" (displaced persons) - poor, dirty Ukrainians.

My father had identical complaints, and he would often comment on other races and religions. He would make short contemptuous, dismissive remarks like, "Ah, Francuse!" (Frenchman) or, "Peh, Nyeemits!" (German) or, "Peh! Anglyeek!" (Englishman) or, "Zhed!" (Jew) or, "Indian!"

My father had this same attitude towards Protestants and other religious or ethnic peoples, though only behind their backs. In daily life, he acted like he was respectful and everyone's friend, and indeed, he did seem to trade his contempt for some respect for those different from himself as time passed. It seemed to me that he had his original attitude because he suffered low self-esteem, and the attitude and its consequences deeply, tragically affected me.

Is it not remarkable how what we do to others comes to be fulfilled in us? By trying to make others look small or inferior, we get to feel that way about ourselves. It is a vicious circle, a process feeding on itself.

My father seemed to get along, especially in later life, with successful or well-adjusted people in society - Ukrainian, English, Jew, or whatever else. He had a comfortable, if not close, friendship with John Lysak, the hospital administrator in Dauphin. He went fishing with English doctors, Dr. Stevens and Dr. Barry Carlson, Harvey the hospital pharmacist, accountant Bill Conway and comptroller Art Hiebert.

What was wrong with me? Yes, I also got along with several people of various classes, religions, and races. My discomfort was hidden from the undiscerning eye. It was likely the same for my father and others, too.

It would take me a while, and it would be quite a process, before I came to have peace with myself and enjoy that wonderful repose of feeling and conviction of equality with all others, no matter their race, gifts, status, or accomplishments. Thankfully, by God's grace, I have not fallen to feeling superior to others; I certainly hope not!

### **Particle - Little Things Mean a Lot**

Donnie Ryz sometimes came to school with his pockets stuffed with crispy, delicious sweet/sour crabapples from their tree, and he generously shared them with me. I felt so privileged. We never had any fruit trees, I loved crabapples, and treats were not common for us.

Here I am, half a century later, recounting this as though it was so significant - and obviously to me at that time it was. Yes, little things **do** mean a lot. Never forget it. One of my many regrets is that I haven't remembered this truth throughout my life, and I failed to treat others better, especially children.

#### **Particle - Divorce in the Days of My Childhood**

I recall two divorces to which I was somewhat exposed as a child. One was Uncle Bill Atamanchuk's younger brother, Nick, a farmer, whose wife, Olga, left him mournfully yearning for her return (she never did come back). The other was Bill Panko, a meat cutter, whose wife left him the same way, permanently.

In both cases, the women left the men, despite my impression that men were the ones to run around and dump their wives. I saw the impact divorce had on them and it was sad, yet there was nothing they could do but get on with their lives.

I also recall a separation. Alice Michayluk seemed to want out of her marriage to Bill. She left him and her house for a time and he was quite forlorn about it. The children, Winnie and Minnie, were also quite saddened.

#### **Particle - A Sample Apology, Owed to Many**

On our way to school, we would meet up with the Meidl family - Richard, Raymond, and Leonard. While I had some friendship with Richard, who was my age and in my grade, I was often rude to him. Decades later, Richard was an accountant for Allard Motors, the Ford dealership in Dauphin, while I was working for minimum wage at ARC Industries and living in a dumpy apartment across the street from his office.

We briefly met in passing on occasion, and Richard was cold toward me. I don't know whether he thought himself better by occupation, or if he recalled my rudeness in our youth. Whether the latter or not, Richard, I apologize to you and your family. I am sorry for the way I was. I was so wrong. And you were by no means the only ones I've wronged.

#### **Particle - Teacher Stupid and Student Stupefied**

I must have been about nine or ten when I experienced a memorable moment of frustration with ignorance and stupidity in "high places." A teacher one day declared in class that, at birth, a baby's head is as big as that of an adult. I said, "What?" Immediately, I pictured an adult head on a baby and saw how ridiculous an idea that was. I tried clarifying with her what she meant. She was not saying that in proportion to the body, it was larger (a baby's head is actually larger for its body size), but that a baby's head is as large as an adult's head in actual size.

I got angry. I said, "No way! That's silly!" My indignation was all over me. I thought the idea utterly absurd. Had I only been with peers, I would have exclaimed, "Just how stupid can you be?!" But I couldn't do that to my teacher.

Adding insult to injury, the other students sycophantically agreed with, if not sincerely believed, the teacher and began laughing at me in my frustration. I thought, "How can I prove them wrong? I have no baby and no tape measure! What do I do?" I gave up, but I didn't believe them.

Years later, I would discover that people were disposed to believing the most blatant lies, and though I knew better, there would be nothing I could do to convince them otherwise. I would have to learn to accept such circumstances and deal with my frustrations so that they might not consume me.

### **Particle - A Betrayal**

When Gordie Ryz lost interest in me as a school companion - in fact, he seemed to sour against me - I began to chum with Jerry Minarz, a boy one year older. We did many things together, but a friction also developed between Gordie and Jerry.

One day there came to be a competition between Jerry and me for a girl's affections. That girl was Gordie's sister, Ruth. With persistence and opportunity (they went home the same way, opposite to mine), Jerry won her affections, and I was disappointed; he displayed pleasure that he had gotten the better of me, and I was offended.

I decided to go back to friendship with Gordie again, but being as there was enmity between them, I fell in as a traitor to Jerry. We became enemies. Jerry's friends, Ron and Gary Archer, from his former school of Listowel, were so incensed at Jerry's report of me that they looked for opportunity to beat me up.

Some time later, we came to friendly terms, though we did not renew friendship. Years later, I apologized to Jerry, but the damage had been done. He said he forgave me, and I believed him, but the effects remained, in their subtle way. I had the impression Jerry somewhat relished my discomfort and regret.

Some things are never the same when once we have offended, at least not in this life. I know that God has forgiven me and wiped the slate clean, but I also know that I hurt Jerry and his family, which I always regretted.

To make matters worse, his younger brother David was killed in a shooting accident, when perhaps nine or ten years old. The family was devastated, especially his mother Betty, who wore a perpetual frown from that day forward, whereas she had invariably been a cheery, friendly woman. I only added to their burden. My ways have been ungodly and despicable.

Curiously enough, decades later, while being temporarily reacquainted with Jerry, I was suddenly able to see things in a new light. I came to realize that he wasn't entirely innocent or undeserving of my reaction. God was addressing an issue for me that had been there all that time.

### **Particle - Discerning Divine Damnation**

Gordie became sour, not only towards me, but in general - a far cry from what he was when we first met. He became somewhat contemptuous of me, but he became that way with others as well. He was sarcastic, snarly, critical, and generally difficult. One day, Bob Ryz, his older cousin by perhaps four or five years, would not take it any more. He turned on Gordon in fury, caught hold of his shirt at the chest with his left hand, and proceeded to pound him with his right, cursing and swearing as he struck repeatedly. I could hear Bob's hard bony knuckles meet Gordie's forehead and face.



It was shocking to those who witnessed it. Gordie could do nothing more than hang limp from Bob's hand, as Bob beat him. He was not the same after that - quite subdued, the aggressive part of his misery knocked out of him for some time to come.

Years later, I heard that Bob was in a terrible car accident. I saw him after hearing about it. He had been mangled and scarred, and his speech was affected. Seeing him and knowing what had happened was as shocking to me as his beating Gordie.

Immediately, I identified the two events, coming to the conviction they were related. God used Bob to correct Gordie and then the accident to correct Bob. I saw and knew these things as an unbelieving kid, without anybody telling me.

#### **Particle - More Judgment**

I suppose Gordie had not had enough correction because I heard years later that, as a utilities line serviceman, he climbed a pole and fell a considerable distance to the ground. Both legs suffered multiple fractures.

While I don't relish the thought of these boys suffering the things they suffered (I appreciated them both), I relate this to let people know that God's judgment is always with mankind, not waiting for some day in the by-and-by. I saw His judgment working out, with these examples standing out in my mind, likely because they were dramatic and among the first in my experience of life. I have seen so many other examples since; they are everywhere all the time. People indeed reap what they sow; we all do.

#### **Particle - More Apologies**

Another lesson: The unregenerate person often does not learn good things. As I related, in first and second grade at Riverbend School, I was fat and often wetting and even soiling myself, and I was greatly teased and scorned for it. So did I gain understanding and compassion for others?

Only a couple of years later, at Dauphin Plains School, there was a family of five children who all had problems with incontinence, and they often smelled. The oldest girl, Dorothy, was overweight as well. I was in there along with the others, despising and teasing them mercilessly! What a horrible thing!

Over two decades later, I would meet with the second oldest, Stella, at an evangelical home meeting in Dauphin, where I apologized to her. She was married and, professing faith in Christ, graciously declared me forgiven.

I hereby apologize to her whole family - Dorothy, Roberta, Bob, Jack, and their parents. I pray God will have granted them the mercy and blessings they needed and which He deems fit. They were all kinder, gentler, humbler people, perhaps because of their handicaps.

I would sooner live with the weak and the humble than with the strong and proud who are "superior" and socially popular. Handicaps can be good, very good, and needful. And, yes, I know that the parents may no longer be living, but who says existence ends in this world?

#### **Particle - Big Brother**

I often fought with, and bullied, my brother, Archie, who was once driven to take a butcher knife after me. He got me cornered, and if I had not begged and pleaded with him, he might have seriously injured, if not killed, me.

I spoke of overeating as a cause of my soiling and wetting my pants, but after me, Archie also had this problem; he was the brunt of much cruel mockery... and I didn't stand up to defend him. I even tormented him as did the others. If I was ever a big brother to him, it was only the Orwellian version. I deeply regret it, and I am ashamed to report it. So do we learn or don't we?

### **Particle - Ungrowing Pains**

My parents had friends who had a son about my age. The Matychuk family occasionally visited us and we them. As is the case with many boys, Fred and I were quite competitive, and we were also evenly matched in terms of strength and ability to wrestle. We enjoyed each other's company.

Then something happened. Fred's voice began to change, he began to show a moustache, and his body began maturing faster than mine. He started to tease me and toy with me. He cracked his voice and tried to get me to do it; I tried and failed, time and time again. His voice got deeper, while mine remained that of a boy. He grew in size and strength, and soon I was no longer a match for him.

You've heard of growing pains? I had the opposite. Fred was good about it, though; he still treated me as a friend, though we didn't see one another anymore after a while. More on him later.

### **Particle - Non-Catholics Evil**

Across the road from where we lived, half a mile away from our house, was an old, humble country United Church building with a steeple. I remember that some of our Anglo-Saxon neighbors would go there on Sunday once a month or so. We walked by it every school day. I often wondered what was inside, but I wasn't impressed with the plain wooden, weather-worn, paint-peeled exterior, compared to our stuccoed ornate Byzantine Church with stained glass, domes, arches, crosses, and various details.

I somehow thought less of people who would go to such a poor excuse of a church. "Their religious beliefs must be completely wrong," I thought. Though I did not know the word then, I would have used "heretical" to describe those who would do such things.

When asking my father what the church was all about, he brushed it off as something contemptible. Perhaps worse, "the devil was there." Interestingly, my mother's father had left a church similar to the one we were attending (Greek Orthodox) because of a dispute with them, and the family (without him) began attending the United Church in Gilbert Plains, their home village, before my mother married and became Catholic.

### **Particle - A Favorite Cousin**

I enjoyed traveling once to Winnipeg by Greyhound bus to spend a few days in the big city with my younger cousin, Brian Romanchuk. From the bus depot on Portage Avenue, I would take the Arlington bus over the Arlington Bridge and transfer to the Inkster bus to their home at Lansdowne.

Brian's father, Victor, was a barber, and his mother, Joey, a hairdresser, who had her salon in their home. I recall having some friction with Joey.

Years later, Brian married Gail, a friendly and pretty girl. I expected their wedding to be a rather happy one; why, I'm not sure.

#### Particle - **Masturbation**

I was, in general, a selfish, proud, stubborn, dirty-minded, cowardly kid. It was during these years that a cousin, also from Winnipeg, came to stay with us during the summer vacations. He taught his cousins to masturbate, not that we were innocent, as I have already related. He was about five years older than I. I don't hold it against him. I understand human nature and its corruption, the sexual and other kinds of vices inherent in all mankind. The disgusting habit became entrenched with me until the day God took over my life, years later.

#### Particle - **Bestiality**

I feel I must report one of the most shameful events of my life. We were about ten or eleven, when a neighbor, Andrew, and I entered his barn at his parents' farm. The thought was conceived in us to have intercourse with the heifers tied in the stalls. We made a clumsy and feeble attempt at it, did not make contact, and abandoned the act.

In the days to come, Andrew boasted of this event to my cousin Ed, who was greatly entertained by the report. Embarrassed, I denied we had done anything, Andrew insisted we had, loving the attention he was receiving from Ed, and Ed laughed the more, believing Andrew. I was ashamed and never did admit to it.

It was evil of me to think such thoughts and do such things, it was evil of Andrew to boast of them, and it was evil of Ed to have pleasure in the fact that anyone would even **think** or **speak** of doing, never mind **do**, such things.

#### Particle - **Dirty Laundry a Reality**

I have now confessed horrible things to the world. Why do I bring out such dirty laundry? Will I not incur contempt for myself and those with me, and worse still, for those whose names I mention (in this case, Andrew and Ed) who did not choose to be exposed? What about my family? How will they be affected? Will I not needlessly and unjustly shame those who do not feel it their duty to bring all their lurid details to light?

Did not the apostle Paul speak of things that were so shameful that even unbelievers blush at their mention?

**"For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret"**  
(Ephesians 5:12 MKJV).

Are these not such things? Should I be talking about them? And here is another piece of advice from the apostle Paul touching this matter:

**"Finally, my brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are right, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, think on these things"**  
(Philippians 4:8 MKJV).

I think and hope that when you have finished reading this book, you will have some understanding as to why I dare bring these matters up.

#### **Particle - Laundering a Necessity**

Speaking of dirty laundry, I hated the day when Mom would sort it on the kitchen floor for washing in our ringer washer. I hated the sight, the smell, and the inconvenience. However, laundry day is a good thing, is it not? Cannot laundering be a parable of God's work with dirty people, restoring them to cleanliness? If my mother took on the unpleasant task of restoring cheap, perishable clothing, how much more will God restore those He made in His own image who are desperately soiled?

#### **Particle - The Great "Mr. Clean"**

I tell these things for several reasons. The primary reason is that I want others to know that no matter the sins they have committed, there is hope. No matter how damned or hopeless they think their lot might be, I want everyone to know that no sin is too big for God, no job too dirty for Him, no soul too disgusting or beyond His reach to redeem. "Is My arm shortened that it cannot save?" He asks in the Scriptures.

Think of how long His arm is! Can anybody, in any way, whether by distance or conduct or corruption or hatred or betrayal or perversion or any other way, extend him or herself beyond God's arm? To say one is able to do so would be to declare oneself more powerful, and that God is not omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

"Mr. Clean will clean your whole house and everything that's in it," went the commercial of the all-purpose cleaner. With God it is guaranteed. It is as good as done!

#### **Particle - Freedom from Fear**

I have other reasons for declaring these things, with names. I spoke to Andrew decades later. At the time, he professed faith in Christ in a Pentecostal environment in Winnipeg, Manitoba, sometime in the '80s. Based on my experience with God, I believe that anyone with a genuine life-changing repentance will not be offended at any exposure of the past. If his faith is real, he will endure; if not, he will be offended. If our faith is in God, we are not moved, knowing He is sovereign and governs all things.

I also would like Ed to know that there is nothing that I am not prepared to face. Any true believer should feel the same. I am exuberantly thankful for such a freedom in Christ, Who has called me to His side before the world.

#### **Particle - The Answer, First and Last**

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I want everyone to know that Jesus Christ is the only sure hope of deliverance from any and all problems and bondages. He has done it for many; He has done it for me, and He will do it for anyone and eventually everyone, no matter who you are or what you have done.

#### **Particle - Hunting and Trapping**

Uncle Bill had what was called a rabbit gun, a short single shot .22 caliber rifle. He wanted me to shoot flickers, which would peck away at his house roof. I went out and shot flickers, gophers, crows, rabbits, and whatever came along. What is it that gives people, particularly males, pleasure in killing things?

One day while in the bush on my own with my single shot .22, I spotted a Canada lynx following me. I turned around, took aim at his head (he was hiding behind a log with only his head showing), fired, missed, and he took off. I'm glad he didn't have the mind to attack, seeing I only had the one shot.

I was taught how to hunt and trap when I was about ten. I had a weasel trap line, and it annoyed me when I caught squirrels, whose pelts were far less profitable than those of weasels. I also snared rabbits, and though their pelts were saleable as well, they were worth so little, I would feed the whole thing to the dogs. I caught very few weasels. Some of those I did catch would only leave a leg in the sprung trap, having chewed it off to escape.

#### **Particle - No Money in More Moles**

Uncle Fred Prestayko had moles plaguing his field, digging high mounds and interfering with his machinery. He offered me a dollar for every one I caught. That was a generous offer to a kid in those days for something like that. I guess he thought there was only one or two.

To trap moles, the trap must be in darkness. With rhubarb leaves, I concealed my trap in the molehills with soil supported by more rhubarb leaves. I succeeded in catching several moles, but Uncle Fred didn't pay me, not believing I had caught so many. I should have saved the tails to prove it, but the necessity didn't occur to me - I fed the moles to the cats, thinking he would take my word for it. I don't know that Uncle Fred would have paid me anyway. Broken promises towards me were not uncommon.

#### **Particle - Uncles Can Be So Selfish**

One day, a valuable registered Holstein dairy cow of Uncle Fred's keeled over, bloated because it had found its way into an alfalfa field that was still moist from the night's dew. Aunt Mary tried desperately to save it, crying, trying to get the cow up and walking, but she failed. We were later told that a swift, decisive, well-placed puncture in the cow's side, releasing the pressure, could have saved the cow, but Aunt Mary didn't know.

They kept the body for three days in summer heat, waiting for the veterinarian to do an autopsy. Then the body needed to be disposed of. Uncle Fred chained the carcass to the tractor and dragged it out to the far pasture for burning. He added wood, tires, and gasoline and lit the pyre.

It was necessary to approach the fire and add more fuel because the body was not burning well. You can't imagine the stench of burning hair and hide, rotten flesh, and tires! You could smell it from a distance in the hot summer air. I have never smelled anything so awful.

Uncle Fred insisted that I throw on the wood. I tried but found the task too repulsive. He got angry with me. I then asked him why he wouldn't do it. He gave me some excuse and almost forced me to do the job because he was gagging, but I did not obey; I was also gagging. I said, "You do it," and walked away.

Could it be that Uncle Fred lost the cow for not keeping his promise to pay me for all the moles I caught? I have known things to work that way....

### **Particle - Sundays a Nightmare**

We were dragged to Mass at the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Dauphin every Sunday morning. Farm chores had to be done earlier, and taking the extra trouble to wash up was a chore. We had to dress in our Sunday best with ill-fitting clothes and tight, uncomfortable dress shoes. To wash the dirt from our ears and the mucous from our eyes that we had missed, my mother turned to us in the back seat, spitting on a handkerchief and wiping us down while on the way to town. Sunday mornings were very troubling.

The church was crammed with people. The mixture of body odor from unbathed poor, older people and frankincense from the censers was nauseating. Fresh air was in short supply because they did not think to open windows until altar boys were fainting. Adding to the stifling atmosphere, the Mass was in Slavonic, a language incomprehensible to us, and the whole event was formal, regimented, and utterly boring.

Besides that, we had to confess our sins to the priest, which was not pleasant at all - unless we had no sins to confess, of course, but that was rarely my case.

Was it worth going to church? No doubt, all that was a super pleasant Sunday picnic compared to going to hell and burning forever and ever, 24/7.

### **Particle - No Money, No Church**

Our church was crammed in the '50s and only getting worse, so a call went out to raise funds for a new building or an extension on the old. I was told when I was yet in my teens that money was collected, submitted to the "Very Reverend" Gregory Oucharyk, and disappeared. Decades later, they still had the same old Byzantine building.

### **Particle - My First Atheistic Challenge**

I must have been about ten or so when Dad hired a neighboring bachelor in his early forties, Mr. Stefaniuk, to help stucco our farm house. I was helping the man. I remember standing on top of the back porch while we were stapling tar paper and wire mesh and getting into a conversation with him, one I hadn't expected.

"There is no God!" he declared bitterly. "People use religion for a crutch! In the Soviet Union, they don't believe in God at all, but they all work together and everything is provided for everybody, no matter who you are - education, medical treatment, jobs, welfare, you name it! Best place in the world!"

"You have no freedom in Russia, and everybody lives in fear," I replied. "Who made everything if there's no God?"

"What you've heard about Russia is lies - propaganda!" he answered. "They just don't want you to know the truth! God is a big lie! Our government doesn't want you to know how much better it is in the Soviet Union! And God never made anything. Everything you see just happened, and whatever you don't see doesn't exist."

It was a bit of a shock to me, not because I felt threatened, but because I was finding out that not everybody believed in God. It was a surprise to me. I hadn't run into anyone like that before. How could there **not** be a God?

I remember getting a bit annoyed with him. I think I said, "Well, if it's so great there, why don't they let the people out? Why are they forced to stay? Maybe they can't come here, but **you** can go **there** if you want. Why don't you, if it's so good? What are you waiting for?"

He gave me some excuse, and he promised that Communism was coming to North America soon, and the whole world would one day accept it as a matter of progress and deliverance from religious fantasy. I admit I felt a bit of a chill; I certainly didn't like the prospect of living in an intensely controlled society.

(I believe we had heard of some people, and knew some in our church, from the Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia who had escaped the Iron Curtain, so I was aware of some of these things. We had heard of the Soviet Communist system in school, as well.)

"So anything you don't see doesn't exist? Do you see air? Don't breathe if you don't believe in it," I said.

To be sure, it was a low-level intellectual debate, and I think I got the better of him with simple childlike reason, while he, as an uneducated adult, had only his childish reason. I still recall his countenance when the work was done and Dad and I were saying goodbye to him as he sat in his Karmann Ghia. While Dad was friendly to him, Mr. Stefaniuk had a scornful attitude he was trying to suppress.

I have encountered several atheists since then and find a common denominator, without exception. That denominator is bitterness accompanied with cynicism. Oh, there are some atheists who try to put a nice face on their denial of God's existence, but when push comes to shove, they can get quite bitter and nasty. I seem to have the knack of provoking them into revealing their inner thoughts and feelings before too long. I was annoyed with my first atheist, and I still get annoyed with the foolishness of atheism and the stupidest, most incredible lie ever told and believed - evolution.

#### Particle - **Getting Wet and Getting Over It**

I mentioned the first time I had a stirring within me concerning God. Another time, when I was about nine or so, I was returning from the field after delivering refreshments to my father while he was doing field work on his McCormick tractor. A sudden electrical cloudburst caught me with no shelter available anywhere. The thunder and lightning were dramatic, and water came down as out of a bucket. Frightened out of my wits, I cried out to God.

Then something happened. It was as though I was not afraid anymore, not only of the rainstorm, but in another way. It seemed that courage was bestowed on me, so that I could trust God in my circumstances in some limited, unconscious manner. I can't explain it, and my memory does not serve me well here. I believe that part of the secret was to accept and yield to that which could not be avoided. Get wet, and get over it. Was it Laurence of Arabia who said the secret to enduring pain was not minding that it hurt?

#### Particle - **The Ground Rises and the Sky Falls**

I had another “encounter with God” when I was around eleven or twelve. One thing after another was going wrong. I was exasperated. One day, I stepped on a rusty nail and impaled my foot - giving rise to the common fear of tetanus. On another day I was splitting wood under a tree, and as I brought down the axe, I hooked a branch with it down onto my head, which shocked me. It seemed as though the ground was biting from beneath and the sky was falling in on me. I cried out to God in desperation, fearful and broken, begging for forgiveness of my sins. A peace came to me after that, and I had no more such incidents for a while.

#### **Particle - Fire Destroys Stubble and Straw**

Occasionally, we would burn the stubble on our fields - not a good thing to do, I’m told, but that’s what we did then. My father sent me out to do the job and warned me to keep the fire well away from the straw stack, which was needed to bed our cattle. I headed out with my jacket and a Mason jar of water to drink. I started the fire and spread it. It was not long before the wind came up and shifted, heading straight for the stack.

Alarmed, I fought the fire, trying to keep it from the stack, but the wind was too strong. Soon I found myself standing immediately in front of the stack, fighting the fire. I poured the drinking water on my jacket and used the partially wet jacket to beat off the fire, but as I was beating and swinging the jacket over my shoulder, I unwittingly tossed fire behind me.

As I was crying, desperately beating the fire in vain, I did not see or hear my father drive up with the tractor. But then hearing his shouting, I looked up and saw him motion me to come out of the fire (I was not aware that I was surrounded). Jumping over the fire with my burning jacket, the defeat was complete, the stack aflame. I consider it possible that in my panic and preoccupation with the fire, I might have gone up with the stack if my father had not come along.

I thought I was going to “catch it” from him, but all he did was look at me in silence, with understanding, perhaps even compassion. Oftentimes, we can speak more effectively with our eyes than with our mouths, and with silence than with words. The stack went up in great flames, but my father never mentioned a word of it to me, and there was no need for it. My loss and defeat were sufficient.

I wonder about how we might often battle fires in life, but tossing fire behind us, endangering and defeating ourselves. When the wind is against us, there is little we can do but be rescued by our Heavenly Father, summoned out of destruction.

#### **Particle - The Dreadful Dead**

The first dead person I ever saw was my Uncle Sytnick at his funeral. I don’t recall how old I was - perhaps anywhere from eight to ten - he was in his seventies. It was very strange seeing a well-dressed body lying so still in a fancy white, silk-lined casket, a waxy face with an ever-so-slight smile fixed to look as though he was at peace.

Somehow it was a mysterious contradiction to me. I wondered, “How can there be happiness with death? People are dressed in black, crying, and he’s smiling?” I almost expected him to suddenly, yet casually, clutch the sides of the casket, sit up, and scatter the crowd into the far countryside. I don’t think anybody would have been too receptive of his suddenly coming alive; they would be terrified, suspecting he was up to no good, like a ghoul; not that he was known to be mean-spirited or evil in any way.



I visualized the buried coffin and body slowly rotting, infested with worms. Nobody seemed to know where Uncle was now, except that the Catholic Church taught that most people go to Purgatory for a thousand years or more of torment in fire before being granted entrance to Heaven - provided they had been good Catholics, having been baptized, and people held paid-for Masses for the departed to release them from Purgatory. I think many believed Uncle wasn't bad enough for Hell or good enough for Heaven, so he was likely in Purgatory. With some sacrifice and prayer on their part, perhaps he had a chance.

I looked at the funeral directors and couldn't fathom how anyone would want to be involved in that business, working with dead people day after day. I supposed, as was rumored, they got rich on wristwatches, rings, gold fillings, and general precious paraphernalia the superstitious mourners would wish to bury with the body.

Some time later, my widowed aunt gave me a job in her florist business. I was to sit in a garden shack by myself, taking apart dozens of used funeral wreaths, salvaging reusable parts. While I somehow knew there was no danger, I was very uncomfortable with it. I wonder how useful it would have been including this work experience on a resume. Perhaps a casual attitude or a show of courage about the dead could serve some purpose as a character reference?

#### **Particle - Pleasures Take Their Toll**

I don't remember the exact details of this next tragedy. News came to us one day that about three older teen boys in our farming neighborhood decided to relieve themselves of the Manitoba summer heat and went swimming in the local Wilson or Valley river. One or two drowned. It was reported by the survivor(s) that a strong undercurrent pulled the victim(s) under. I seem to remember that one or more of the swimmers tried to save a distressed one and also drowned, or nearly so. It was a shocking and sad affair. Though I didn't know the people personally, my parents were familiar with them.

#### **Particle - Childhood Books and Heroes**

The best gift anyone could buy me at any time was a book. I became quite interested in reading when I was ten or so. I particularly liked collecting the shiny-covered Whitman books, but any good storybook would do. I also collected ten-cent Dells, and I prized and collected the fifteen-cent Classics Illustrated comic books.

My heroes were Tarzan (how I would have loved to live in Africa, with big trees and vines, less the snakes!), Superman (what boy didn't want to fly and have all that physical power - even invincibility! - less the threat of kryptonite?); Robin Hood (oh, to shoot a bow and arrow like him!), Roy Rogers (how I would have loved to have a twin gun and holster set, cowboy hat, boots, spurs, bandana, and a pony just like Trigger!); the Lone Ranger, with the mask; Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, Rex Allen, Lash LaRue (how I would have loved to have a bullwhip!); the Cisco Kid (how I admired Spanish - I still like it to this day), Zorro (ah, to be a swordsman like him!), and our homegrown hero, Sergeant Preston of the Yukon, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer, with his muskrat hat and "wonder dog," Yukon King.

#### **Particle - Cartoons, Good or Bad?**

There was a day when foolish and ignorant authorities canceled cartoons like Looney Tunes with Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, Daffy Duck, Sylvester the Pussycat, Tweety Bird, Roadrunner, Yosemite Sam, Porky Pig, Chip and Dale, and others. Why? They said the cartoons were too violent.

Violent? That was stupid! The cartoons were educational. We learned about human nature - about what worked and what didn't work in social relationships. We laughed and laughed. Those cartoons were ever a source of humor, never pain for anyone. (Yogi Bear, Boo Boo, and Donald Duck also taught us about right and wrong.)

I had a good many laughs with Terry Szmon, my uncle, who was two years younger than I. He had a marvelous sense of humor, and he could effectively imitate those characters in spirit. Those cartoons were ever a source of goodwill and social wellbeing, never of evil or violence. There was always the heightened awareness of the foibles and quirks of humanity, the folly of pride and presumption, and the contradictions and exaggerations of personalities found everywhere in the world.

Even today I marvel at the humorous insights of the creators of these characters, their names (like Petunia Pig, Tweety Bird, and Foghorn Leghorn), voices (like Mel Blanc's), accents, peculiar vocabularies, and the scenarios or story lines. People can be very funny, and if we are taught anything, it is not to take ourselves seriously, in terms of virtue or superior traits in our own right. A remarkable humbling mechanism kicks in automatically when we act otherwise - we end up making fools of ourselves.

I cannot say the same for today's cartoons. Things have changed. There now prevails a proud, independent, mean, arrogant, rebellious, disrespectful spirit in the characters, a reflection of the producers, no doubt, and it is presented more as something socially legitimate than as something comical or foolish. That is where the violence comes in. It is some of today's cartoons that could be legitimately banned for the reasons erringly used before.

#### Particle - **The Born Loser**

I never seemed to be able to win, or win at, anything. For one reason or another, it was withheld from me. I recall poetry reciting contests where I would come in second, but never first. There was once a Halloween costume contest in which I **did** win, one of the conditions being that we would have to act out the characters, as well as wear the costumes. Prizes were coming from town, but the road was blown over in a blizzard, so I was told, and I never did see the only first prize I ever won! Talk about a born loser! I believe I was lied to; they could have given me the prize at first opportunity.

There may be another reason I received no prize: With a mask, nobody knew who I was but my mother, who helped me with the costume. I was emboldened by concealment to do things I would not have done in public. Dressed in women's clothing, I pretended I was flirting with the men as they sat around the auditorium. Many got a kick out of it. "Who *IS* that?" I heard them exclaiming in their amusement. It seemed they were quite surprised when they found out.

But I look back with embarrassment. Perhaps God in His mercy withheld me from being rewarded with a prize for such behavior, although I enjoyed the temporary attention and recognition.

I remember that while I was acting the part, I was curious or struck about something. Why wasn't I being reproved for what I was doing? How come the adults were letting me get away with it? Do masks and costumes make such behavior acceptable? I don't recall that my parents or anyone else ever saying anything to me later. Perhaps the adults concluded I shouldn't receive a prize for that kind of conduct after all.

## **Particle - Tragedy a Door to Better Things**

While I was losing externally, God was enriching me invisibly.

When I was about ten, we had distant farm neighbor friends, the Preslowskis, whose house burned down. They lost everything. Their home for the next long while was a granary. They were friendly people and well liked; it was a shock to the community. People gave to them whatever they could.

Farming had been hard for the Preslowskis, and the fire was the last straw. Soon they held a farm auction and moved to Etobicoke, Ontario. A few years later, they returned to visit us. Ralph had established a fuel delivery business with a tanker truck fleet and was doing very well. "You know what?" he said. "That fire was the best thing that ever happened to us!" His remark found its way to the inner recesses of my consciousness. I marveled that such tragedies could turn out to be good.

## **Particle - The Dairy Devil**

A main source of income was our dairy. The health inspector would occasionally arrive on short notice to see that we were doing everything right. I say "on short notice," not because he would notify us, but because other dairy farmers he was visiting would warn us by phone that he was on the way.

My parents were always anxious at those times, uncertain that our facilities and methods of operation would be approved. The inspector at the time was Cy Puls. He was outspoken, strict, and uncompromising. Frankly, my parents and likely many others were quite afraid of him. As a child, I grew to fear him above any man with whom we had to do that I can recall.

But the time would come, years later, when he would take a position I appreciated.

## **Particle - Country School Picnics**

Every year the country schools would have annual picnics, and we always looked forward to those. Everyone would come to them - parents, neighbors, whoever wanted to come. There were hardball and softball games and various kinds of races; everyone willing and able participated.

Some kids enjoyed running around and picking up discarded glass pop bottles, worth 2 cents each. Five of those bought a fresh Pepsi, Coke, Seven-Up, Dr. Pepper, Wynola, Stubby, Two Way, or other drink, cold from large coolers full of water and dry ice. Or we could get an Oh Henry, Sweet Marie, or Eatmore bar, or a bag of Planter's salted peanuts, hard ice cream cone, Wrigley's stick gum, or watermelon (I hated watermelon, however, and I couldn't understand why so many enjoyed it). There were also salted sunseeds in the blue, red, and white packets.

Picnics in my first years of school were nightmares, because I was too fat to run - left far behind by everyone, and I mean, everyone. It wasn't until years later that I found myself able, willing, and even winning. Third prize was 5 cents, second prize 10 cents, and first prize 15 cents.

## **Particle - The Home Run that Wasn't**

Field Day was held for the perhaps three dozen rural schools in the Dauphin area. We had banners and drums, and we marched before the judges for trophies.

We also had a softball tournament. In my last year of rural school, I was left-fielder on our softball team. By the time Field Day arrived, I had become a relatively skillful player on the team, catching and hitting well. Because we were a smaller school (only about thirty students), with few, if any, larger boys, we did not expect to get far in the tournament.

For the first couple of games, I felt like I had been drugged. I just could not get it together. But then something happened; I got heated up and became very energetic. Inexplicably, everything started to flow for me. I caught would-be home runs, saving the day with several difficult catches, and I hit home runs.

To our surprise, though up against teams with more mature players, we found ourselves in the finals and down to the very last game. We started off behind in the first few innings, and then the runs started to come in - there was hope!

I felt the pressure; everyone seemed to be looking to me for the win, because I could hit the ball. It was the last inning, the score was 12 to 9 for the other team, we were at bat, the last to bat, the bases were loaded, two out, and it was my turn. Stepping up to the plate, I knew that if they would but deliver that ball over the plate, I stood a chance of bringing in four runs with a homer, winning the game.

“Back up! This guy hits!” the pitcher hollered to the outfielders. I hoped to hit it beyond the field, so that all bases could come home safely with ease. It was our only chance because after me, a girl was up to bat who could not really play much ball, even less hit (we did what we could with our school enrollment).

They had a logical, if unfair, strategy. They would walk me, let us score a run, and strike out the next player. The pitcher refused to give me a ball over the plate. Our coach, Frank Ryz, was trying to goad their pitcher, “Play fair and pitch right!” I waited for strategy from him, but there was none forthcoming.

What could he do? He knew the situation and the rules, and I think he just hoped for the best. The pitcher pitched wild balls, as far as three or four feet away from the plate, and high. I knew I had no choice but to try to hit them, and try I did and failed - perhaps I tried too hard.

So close to being a hero and failing! That was the story of my life, if not being a miserable loser. Is it possible the girl after me could have hit a run and then someone after her? Anything is possible. Was I presumptuous to think it all depended on me? Perhaps so. But if nothing else, I gained some self-respect and the respect of others that day, which I had somewhat lacked. It was a bittersweet experience.

But there was much more to be gained by the failure. There were other plans for me from above. The day would come when being thrown wild pitches to avoid my hitting a home run would be the order of the day from thousands, and I would have to learn to rest, wait for willing pitchers, and let the ball come to me, while I remained at the plate, willing to be walked if necessary.

#### Particle - **Urbanization**

We moved from the farm to the town of Dauphin in 1959. It was quite a change for me, but it wasn't long before I had jobs, new interests, buddies, and girlfriends. For a while, Duane Whyte and Dennis Tokar, characters who loved to tussle and have fun, befriended me. I got greasy with the city kids when Duane got me going on Brylcreem, but I preferred Wildroot. I later joined up

with three other fellows - Ed Korpan, Kenny Dowson, and Wayne "Winky" Childs. Ed was the leader. Ultimate tragedy would come to at least two of these three in later years.

### **Particle - Haste and Unpreparedness Make Waste**

As with most farmers moving away, we held an auction. It was disorganized. Dad either did not have the time or the needed help to prepare for it properly. As a result, several items were sold for next to nothing. For example, we had a welder on a car chassis that Dad had built (he was a man of diverse interests and abilities), which could be towed from place to place and used anywhere. While Dad was occupied trying to herd cattle or whatever, the auctioneer, not knowing what it was, sold it for a pitiful \$5.

### **Particle - Losing Lady**

Just before the auction, we had a good team of trained workhorses, Barny and Lady. Lady was our favorite of all the horses we had owned. She was gentle and a good team horse. She was also a smart one, too smart for her own good. She figured out how to slide the door bar of the wooden granary with her nose through its slots to open the door and gain access to the grain (I suppose Dad should have secured the door to prevent her. Perhaps he did make adjustments he thought would solve the problem, not expecting her to be so persistent and clever).

One day she opened the door and helped herself to the grain. As a result, she became terribly bloated. Dad expected that unless we did something, she would likely die. He mounted me on her and told me to walk her and not let her sit still. I did that for some time and slowly she began to show signs of recuperation. Meanwhile, Dad called the veterinarian, who came out.

The veterinarian, Dr. Rutledge, simply did not know what he was doing. First of all, he did not see that the horse was likely not in need of treatment (perhaps we did not communicate the circumstances clearly enough). But more importantly (and I find this part incredible), he took a few feet of hard thick rubber hose and forced it up her nose, I suppose to relieve the bloating pressure or send some substance through the hose to neutralize the gas or give her some medication.

While the procedure in and of itself was a common and acceptable one, it seems to me that one with any knowledge of physiology ought to know that with the kind of rugged hose he used, with its sharply cut edges, serious injury would result. It did. Our favorite horse, Lady, hemorrhaged and died.

The ignorance and ineptitude of a green veterinarian had several implications. We lost a beloved friend; we lost a workhorse team, an important and valuable asset in those days, and it made the other horse, Barny, less valuable by himself. Furthermore, now we had to dispose of the large carcass, which was no easy job, especially at a busy time when there was so much to do to prepare for the auction.

Last but not least, the vet took no responsibility for our loss, though it was his fault. We were hurt and angry. Being uneducated, my father, who had only gone through sixth grade, held educated, professional people in awe, particularly those in the medical field, and though he might ponder and complain privately, he was not prepared to strive with them for justice and equity. Likely, it would have gone nowhere anyway.

### **Particle - A Strange Reaction**

One day, I was standing on the school grounds at recess at Smith Jackson Junior High, and someone came up from behind and tapped me on the shoulder. Instantly, I took him (I don't know how), flipped him over myself, and had him on the ground with me on top of him. It turned out to be a casual friend, Clarence Moar, a native from the McKay Indian Residential School. I don't know why I reacted that way, but it was instinctive, swift, and effective. The boy was shocked, having intended no harm.

I have often wondered why I reacted that way or how I was capable of it. I know that when someone slapped or even tapped me on the back of the head without warning, it would greatly disturb me, and I could react with great anger.

### **Particle - The Mysterious McKay**

The McKay Indian Residential School in Dauphin was a mystery to me. It just didn't fit in somehow. I couldn't comprehend the mixture. It was a school for children, but religion was involved - it was operated by the Anglican Church. Why them? It was composed only of native children, but the supervisors were all white. What was going on? I didn't understand.

Many of the kids from McKay were bussed to the public schools in town, including Smith Jackson. I remember some of the kids:

There was Harvey Mann and his sister Donna. They were always laughing and cheery. Donna had a liking for me, and she teased me.

There was Clarence Moar, a quiet and friendly fellow.

There was John Martin, a big, stocky, muscular guy. Though he was quiet and friendly, he was someone nobody, not even the school rough-housers, would ever think of tangling with.

There was Harry, also quiet and friendly, not small or weak, but not too big or apparently powerful, and guys challenged him to fight. Harry was not one to back down, as much as he disliked the conflict.

There was also Doc Garson, a quiet, spectacled, sober fellow, who was well liked. I had forgotten all about him until today, 50 years later when I heard a news segment about a Canadian football player named "Doctor."

### **Particle - My Experience with Indian Assimilation**

The time would come when there would be great publicity in Canada about how the government forcibly took native children from their parents to assimilate them into the white man's culture and system of things. I sympathize with the Indians. I deem it tragic and abominable that children should be wrested from their parents, the parents being innocent of any crime.

I can slightly identify with them because I was separated from my parents to an extent. But the natives were taken from their environment and culture altogether. Their language and religion were taken from them. They were taken away long distances, and for years, forced to live together in residential buildings. Their opportunities to reconnect with their families at any time during those years were practically nil, from what I have heard.

While I didn't suffer racism or contempt for being backwards, I did suffer contempt from my fellow students, which certainly can be more difficult than the contempt of strangers, from whom respect is not always expected.

The publicity on this issue turned out to be highly one-sided and negative. Native lawsuits claimed billions of dollars for horrible abuses by these schools and by the clergy involved. We would hear story after story in the media of great sorrow and suffering of the children in these residential institutions. Nevertheless, for the record and for some balance, I would like to declare some observations about how I saw these people where I was involved with them:

I saw happy Indian kids at the Smith Jackson School and the McKay Residential. They were smiling, laughing, playing with us, involved in all the activities, and for the most part, received by us whites, more so than some other whites were. The natives were well dressed, groomed, and well fed (better than several of us).

And it wasn't as though they didn't wish to be groomed. Harvey, Clarence, John, Doc and Harry took pride in carrying rat tail combs and combing their hair often. Donna was always well dressed with pretty blouses and dresses, makeup and all, and it was obvious she enjoyed it.

All their physical needs were taken care of. They seemed to have general privileges and conveniences we did not have. When I delivered the newspaper to their residential school, I would sometimes see Indian children around, playing and studying me, perhaps hoping to be playful, even a bit mischievous, if they had the opportunity.

I do not justify how the government handled matters, and I do not say that human freedoms and family contact are worth milk, cookies, pretty blouses, and rat tail combs from strangers. All I am saying is that it wasn't always bad as made out to be, at least not in the cases I witnessed. The Indian children received immersion in the up and coming language and culture. They received education that would grant them to adapt and succeed, if they were willing, in the white man's world, which was an inevitable development anyway.

### Particle - What Is Good or Evil?

How fair was it that Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery in murderous hatred, without warning, parting him and his father Jacob, who loved him as his favorite? Had Joseph decided on bitterness, he would have lost everything. Instead, he submitted to his circumstances and rose to be ruler in Egypt second only to Pharaoh, as God had purposed.

His sufferings first broke him then enlarged, matured, and strengthened him. In the decades to come, he saved his father from whom he was violently separated, his brothers who sought his destruction, the neighboring superpower of that day - Egypt, and the nations round about from the ravages of a devastating famine.

Should he have sued for personal damages?

What is oppression? What is evil? What is right, and what is wrong? In the end, Joseph said to his brothers, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." He saw the Divine Hand of wisdom and destiny at work in his life. Accepting it as such, he prospered. Acceptance is the secret.

Many of us know the story of *Ben Hur*. What good was it for him to resist? It was futile and unproductive. But when he accepted his circumstances, he excelled and came to victory, both

within and without. *Gladiator* has similar elements in its story line. Many stories do. We see laws at work, do we not? If we keep them, we succeed, but if we break them, truly, they break us.

Canadian native actor Tom Jackson decided to take a positive attitude towards the harshness of the system against him. After being beaten by white cops in a jail in Winnipeg, Manitoba, he decided his deathstyle wasn't for him, and that decision took him off the street, out of self-destruction, and eventually into the company of those who are considered genuine successes.

I had no choice when I was sent to live with my uncle and aunt. What better thing could I do than to accept my circumstances and make the best of them? It was not easy to do - we do not accept because it is easy to do; that is silly. We accept hardship and unsavory circumstances because we have little or no choice, and if no choice, there is a plan being worked out in our lives beyond us, which is for good, so why resist? What is in our power is to have a resigned, cooperative attitude and make the best of it.

My advice to those bitter natives who cry in their beer is to change their attitudes, look at the other side of the coin, and begin to excel rather than languish. That, of course, goes for all who choose to bemoan their lot rather than make the best of it - red, white, yellow, brown, black, blue, or purple, the last two colors often found in those who refuse to submit.

What did the green grape say to the purple grape? "Breathe! Breathe!" That's what we need to do.

#### **Particle - An Example of Need for Improvement among Natives**

When I still attended the Dauphin Plains school, I knew a Métis family, the MacKenzies. There were three children - Thomas, the oldest, his sister Leona, and another - Lionel, I think. More often than not, they went hungry. They were poorly dressed, dirty, and smelly.

Thomas came to school with a pocketful of garlic that he ate in class, sitting behind Raymond McKillop. Raymond complained to his mother Mary that he was nauseated by the smell and couldn't do his work. She complained about Raymond having to be subjected to such dire circumstances, not considering that the children she complained about had little or no food. (By the way, Mary was part native and, I was told, wouldn't have others know it.)

The teacher was concerned and tried to get food to them. Some parents brought lunches for them, which they gladly received. What was our responsibility towards them? Why didn't I think to sacrifice some, or even all, of my lunch, if only once?

What should or could they have done for themselves when the father neglected their basic needs, choosing his liquor over their food? The family roamed; the father worked on farms wherever he could. Mr. MacKenzie once came to work for us. He was a good worker, but when he got paid, we would not see him again for days. He went on drinking binges while his family had nothing, and when the money was gone, he returned to work.

My father eventually decided that he would not pay him until the work was done satisfactorily, knowing it might not get done at all if he paid him prematurely. If Mr. MacKenzie had spent his earnings on food for the family, fine, but it wasn't that way.

We once drove by a building where the MacKenzies had temporarily lived. It was a desolate, broken-down log building, likely a barn when last used, on a long since abandoned farm site - no



windows, roof nearly gone, and dirt floor. They had nowhere to go or to live. What did they do in winter? I don't know. They left, and we didn't see them again. I appreciated Thomas and Leona.

### **Particle - Tears Drown a Friendship**

One day, Ed Korpan and I were tussling and he hit me in a spot at the top of my nose that brought tears. For the life of me, I could not prevent them. I was also angry and tried to get my hands on Ed, but he was too fleet of foot. He lost his respect for me that day, deeming me a sissy, and our relationship was done for. (I was to learn in later years that he had accidentally hit me on a sensitive pressure point.)

Years after this incident, I saw Ed at a lunch counter in the basement of the Dauphin Eaton's store. He had joined the Canadian Army. It was apparent to me that he had maintained his disrespect for me.

### **Particle - Suicidal Sidekicks**

In years to come, I heard that Winky Childs took his own life. Years after that, while watching *CBC National*, I saw that Ken Dowson had become Chief of the Winnipeg City Police, was involved in some kind of native scandal, and sadly, he was also reported to have taken his life. I wonder that two of the foursome succumbed to suicide. I wonder what happened to Ed - he was from a rough family. I appreciated them all.

### **Particle - A Quiet and Justified Confidence**

While at the Smith Jackson School for grade eight, I met Louis LeClair. He was Métis and always cheerful and pleasant with everyone. One day, he challenged five of us to a friendly match. We would not take him on, friendly or not. He had a reputation and confidence that was not to be ignored. He said, "OK, I will lay down, and you guys get on top of me and see if I can break free." We accepted.

One fellow was on one arm, one on the other; one on one leg, and one on the other. I sat on Louis' abdomen. "Are you ready?" he asked. Ready? We couldn't see how we needed to be so ready, but we replied we were. He closed his eyes, did some gentle deep-breathing - calm and relaxed - and then suddenly he was a dynamo; within four to seven seconds, he was up, free and beaming.

Obviously, I was impressed by that event.

Louis was not much bigger than each of at least three of us. He was skinny, and he showed no impressive amount of muscle; he was older by a few years, however.

He didn't boast or mock, though I suppose he was showing off a bit; or was he simply giving a demonstration to get the word out so that no one would challenge him? Or was he, perhaps, testing himself? Whatever was going on in his mind, he remained apparently humble and very friendly.

Louis never got into a fight, though we and many others did. I am persuaded there was nobody in school that would have been able to handle him, not even muscular John Martin or Murray Edwards, each of whom we saw as big and tough.

Louis' kind of confidence and humility is valuable and appreciated, consciously or otherwise. His example of such traits impressed me, though I didn't try to emulate him. Somehow, I knew there was a price to be paid for his power, but I was not prepared to pay it, or even interested.

I do wonder what has happened with so many of these people who touched my life. Louis, I hope you and many others get to read this book.

### **Particle - Friend Fred's Fighting Fame**

You will recall my boyhood friend, Fred Matychuk, who matured ahead of me. He preceded me at Smith Jackson School for a year or so before moving to the McNeil School at the north end of Dauphin. Fred developed a reputation as a fighter with whom few cared to tangle. He had become a legend. Again and again, I heard of Fred and the tricks he would pull to win fights.

One fellow took him on more than once; he was also Fred - Witwycki was his last name. He was also a tough fighter, part Indian, if I recall correctly. Both of those Freds - with greased hair, big work boots, and leather jackets - cracked their knuckles and were often at it, getting in trouble at school. Both Freds were generally friendly. I couldn't understand why they fought each other so viciously. Was it hatred or simply competition? I felt badly about it.

When Fred Matychuk left Smith Jackson, he took his reputation with him and added to it at the McNeil School. He was always into fighting. Often I would hear about this tough guy, Fred. "Yeah, I know him. He and I were friends," I would reply.

I was envious. I knew he was tough and courageous, and I knew I was a wimp and cowardly (or at least lacked ability). I just didn't measure up. I didn't begrudge Fred, perhaps because he remained friendly toward me, though he had outstripped me in physical maturity, courage, strength, and popularity. He seemed magnanimous about it. Growing pains!

### **Particle - Confusing People**

I found certain people and social situations confusing or mysterious, whereas others may have had little problem with them. Fred and Mary Prestayko had a divorcee friend with a young daughter, who visited them on occasion. Ms. Simms had two names, her maiden name and her married name, which confused me. She was bitter and cynical toward not only her former husband, but all men.

Her daughter Adrienne was in my tenth grade class. She was friendly, sociable, pretty, and humorous. While we got along, Adrienne was rather influenced by her mother's attitude and therefore cynical of males, though she hadn't experienced unusual unpleasanties with them personally, that I was aware.

Somehow I just couldn't get my head around what was going on with her mother, but I didn't really know or care enough to try. It was just another one of those things that confused me.

### **Particle - What Does Life Hold?**

One day, when I was about thirteen, I helped my Uncle Fred Hafichuk with some yard work at their small home on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, in Dauphin. I appreciated him. We talked, and I have never forgotten what he said to me, while casually expressing his thoughts on life. He concluded, "Victor, what more can a man expect from life than maybe a wife, a house, and a decent job? Then you retire, and that's about it." (Uncle Fred and Aunt Josie never had children.)

His mood was perhaps somewhat despondent, though more reflective and philosophical. His words impacted me. My reaction was one of dismay and disillusionment. "That's all there is to life?! *That's it?!* Is that all I have to look forward to?" I wondered. It seemed but a pittance of what I imagined lay ahead of me, but strangely, I couldn't define or visualize what else there was to life.

#### Particle - **Three Peaceful Rulers**

Here is a peculiarity. I had three Uncle Freds (name meaning "peaceful ruler"), each of them similarly clean, neat, organized, and friendly. I appreciated them all - Hafichuk, Prestayko, and Molnar. All three were willing to have personal talks with me, some confidential.

#### Particle - **Balcaen Bags a Braggart**

I had a hard lesson in job-hunting when we first moved to town. My father advised me to go to the local Safeway store and see the manager, Ad Balcaen, for a job as a general duty and grocery boy. He also advised me to tell Mr. Balcaen that I could work better and harder than the other boys there. So, that's what I did.

Promptly and sternly, Mr. Balcaen took me to task on those comments and pointed me to Ernie Gidilewich, my classmate, who was doing just fine there, able to whip an industrial floor mop around with ease. Mr. Balcaen proceeded to humiliate me in front of the others there, saying to them, "Hey boys, this guy thinks he can work better than you! What do you think?" I knew they did not think much of my boast, though I was surprised they did not take it out on me.

He scolded me for boasting, but he later gave me a job. I was annoyed with Dad for advising me so. When I told him what happened, he only laughed. The lessons? Try a little humility and discretion! And don't believe everything that even your father tells you. Of course, I had that lesson time and time again, but was I learning?

#### Particle - **Bullies to Be Floored, Not Ignored**

Don't go looking for a fight, but when it comes and finds you and won't go away, the fateful challenge must somehow be met.

I recall a fellow paper delivery boy who took a disliking to me. He kept tormenting me, and I kept trying to avoid and ignore him. People say, "Ignore bullies and they'll go away." It didn't work; it seldom, if ever, does.

The only solution to the problem finally came. One day I turned on him and, giving it all I had, put him to the ground in a solid headlock, held him down as tightly as I could, and said, "I have broken bones. I advise you to back off. You got that?" He caved immediately.

It was a lie, of course, but he seemed to believe me or hadn't realized what I was capable of. Not only did he leave me alone, but from that day forward, whenever he saw me, he had a respectful greeting for me. I was impressed!

On another day, a known tough guy and scrapper, Clayton Riehl, picked a fight with me at recess. While we stood facing each other down, I thought I would try the headlock again. Without warning, I grabbed him and put him down, holding him in a very tight headlock.

Looking up for a moment, I saw our principal, Mr. Scrase, watching through a window. He quickly turned away, pretending to see nothing. I thought I might be in for it, because if kids were caught fighting on school grounds, they were disciplined. I finally let Clayton up, he never bothered me again, and I never heard from Mr. Scrase. He would know Clayton was a troubled street kid, and I think he ignored the whole thing, seeing it ended the way it did.

Years later, my Aunt Hazel Chute (my mother's cousin) told me that Clayton (who was her nephew by marriage, but no relation to me) got married and turned out to be a model family man. Good for him! He had come from a broken family.

Particle - **Hail Churchill**

I was quite pleased with myself and with the results of taking up the challenge with bullies instead of trying to avoid them. Chamberlain was wrong; Churchill was right. Thankfully, Churchill was prepared for the hour and rose to the challenge of an ugly, powerful, vain, occultish, insane bully. (Remarkably, there are those in this world who still admire and laud Hitler on his stance against Jews. How naïve, deluded, sick, and murderous people can be!)

Particle - **From a Whisper...**

But like Wiley E. Coyote, Daffy Duck or Sylvester Pussycat, who waxed overly confident after some success, I decided to pick a fight a couple of times.

I had seen an overweight kid, Donald Burdeny, picked on by others. He was afraid of them and would back off in every situation. So one day I thought I would pick on him, too. It didn't work. Donald stood up to me. We did not lay a finger on each other, but he faced me, standing his ground. It seemed I was not as impressive to him as were others. My knees literally quivered.

I backed off somehow and walked away, humiliated and shaken. I realized there was no call for what I had tried to do. The Lord was teaching me, gently. So now I learned the lesson of standing up to bullies from the other side.

Particle - **...To a Shout**

But that lesson was not quite enough. On another occasion, I decided to pick a fight with a kid I didn't like and who didn't like me. It so happened that his father was a former boxer and had taught him how to box. Who knew? What were the chances in the late fifties in a small country town?

Furthermore, his father was there on the scene, coaching him in his fight against me, which was on the street in front of their home. I hoped I could bluff him and let it go, but his father egged him on, quite eager to test his son's skills and training on me. He even brought out a towel and a pan of water for him. I felt a bit outnumbered, outmaneuvered, and confounded.

Though I got him down in the end, Stan Lintick won in terms of fist-fighting, and I went home humbled with a nosebleed and a bruised, cut lip. Someone else had stood up to a would-be bully (me) and prevailed.

I had no valid reason to fight and, this time, the Lord arranged a repeat, yet more instructive and comprehensive, lesson I needed to learn: If you are going to fight, have a good reason for it, or don't do it.

## Particle - **Lessons of War**

Three lessons in all: Stand up to bullies, don't engage in battles you are not prepared to fight with just cause, and be prepared to fight the battles you do fight.

## Particle - **Exceptions Happen**

There was a good-looking but troubled kid, Neil Kabel, who could not resist picking on me. It seemed he fairly despised me. Neil came after me more than once at the Dauphin hockey arena. One day I stood up to him after trying hard to avoid or ignore him. He fought me, and I was surprised by how strong he was for his build and size.

Though he did not hurt me, he did get the best of me, pinning me to the floor in the washroom. He let me go, however, and did not bother me again. It could be that he was satisfied with his temporary superiority and perhaps wanted to hang on to it without defending it again.

He also had a very pretty sister, whom I never met personally, though I would have loved to.

## Particle - **Things Change and Tables Turn**

Jim Durston was a very thin, good-looking farm kid in seventh grade at Smith Jackson School. He was someone I was inclined to tease or pick on, more playfully than brutally, but still rudely. He was weak and flimsy.

I met him again a few years later at Clear Lake, a popular resort in the Riding Mountains, and now Jim proposed a fight with me. He was rather insistent, and it was not hard to see why. He was no longer the scrawny weakling I had known. He was filled out and muscular. Obviously, he had been bodybuilding.

I recall the comic books of those days advertising how scrawny weaklings, who had sand kicked in their faces and girls stolen by macho guys, could enroll in a Joe Weider or Charles Atlas course and gain muscle, confidence, popularity, and girls.

Jim wanted to cash in on his investment, I suppose. I subtly avoided a confrontation, feeling quite certain he would lick me. Perhaps he also had some martial arts training; I didn't know and didn't want to find out, at least not firsthand.

I had, naturally and understandably, negatively impacted Jim by my inconsiderate and arrogant attitude toward him years before, and he was determined to redeem himself. At least he had the satisfaction of knowing I could no longer challenge, much less bully, him.

Lesson: The weak do not necessarily remain weak, and the strong do not necessarily remain strong. "To everything there is a time and season"? And people do not forget. Other lessons I came to contemplate about that situation, however, were perhaps even more important: It is better to make friends than enemies, and we reap what we sow, though it may take time.

Many years later, I bought honey from him at his farm. No words were exchanged about the past, though I was quite sure he had not forgotten.

## **Particle - Budding Workaholic**

Perhaps because I was a mercenary kid, I came to hold down several jobs at once, which did my school grades little justice. First, I rose early every morning and walked or biked nine blocks to the train station (half a mile) or ten blocks to the bus depot to pick up my bundle of the *Winnipeg Free Press* or the *Winnipeg Tribune*. I delivered those all year, with winter mornings as cold as -30 degrees Fahrenheit and sometimes colder.

One of my paper routes stretched out for about a mile, scattered wide, from 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South all the way to the McKay Indian Residential School, Sticky's Drive-In and the trailer court in the area. Broadwise, it stretched for about half a mile, from Main Street to the Vermillion River.

I came home for breakfast then headed for work to Brett's Gift and Stationery, owned by Dr. Gordon Ritchie and managed by Mrs. Elmer Forbes, widow of a politician. There was a short, friendly, pretty woman there - Mary, and there were Mrs. Sytnick and Eleanor Scott, I believe. I enjoyed my duties and the staff there. I did small errands, then headed to school, which started at nine o'clock. After school, instead of heading out for cokes at the Kings Hotel, Dauphin Hotel, or the Grange Café with other kids after school (I could never stomach frivolity or hobnobbing), I was back at Brett's until 6:00 PM, then home for supper.

## **Particle - Fuller Brush and Nick Genik**

After supper, I occasionally went delivering Fuller Brush products for the local salesman and territorial manager, Nick Genik. I picked up the product - bottles, cans, brooms, mops, and more - loaded my Schwinn bike, and headed out for twenty-five cents a delivery.

Nick Genik's home was perpetually in process of being built - no flooring, walls unpainted, and things scattered everywhere. But he was a very successful salesman for Fuller in Manitoba. Nick had a glass eye, which I often wondered about.

## **Particle - Recurring Nightmare of Crossing Railroad Tracks**

I would have to cross perhaps three or four sets of railroad tracks to get my papers at the train station. Sometimes there were railroad cars blocking my way on one or more tracks. I tried to find my way around, and sometimes went under, them.

I developed a recurring nightmare with that theme (this being the first of many recurring nightmares I remember), likely because of some sort of uncertainty or anxiety about the repetitive experience, and perhaps because I was warned of danger in being there. This dream would be taken care of in a very interesting way.

## **Particle - Recurring Nightmare of Driving Up a Steep Hill**

For many years to come, I had the recurring nightmare of being in a vehicle, usually with someone else driving, climbing a steep hill, so steep that the front of the vehicle would tip back. I tried so hard, by willpower (or faith?) to not let it tip. This dream would also be taken care of.

## **Particle - Recurring Nightmare of Stolen Bike**

I often dreamt of leaving my bike outside a school or store only to come back and find it missing. I was unable to retrieve it in any way.

## Particle - Recurring Nightmare of Dauphin Streets Confusing

In another nightmare I developed, which remained for decades, the streets of Dauphin confounded me. I tried to find my way and was never able to get to my destination. The day would come when I was free of this torment.

## Particle - Dauphin's Deadly Dimension

I recall a particularly unpleasant event. On one of my paper routes, a double murder had occurred. Some fellow had shot two women with a shotgun while drinking. They were murdered while trying to run out of the house. I saw blood and pieces of flesh on the steps, ground, and walls, both inside and out. No "Police Line, Do Not Cross" tapes anywhere, not even days after the event. It was horrible - but no nightmares. Why? I expect psychologists have the answer.

## Particle - Cancer Incidence in My Days

Mrs. Strilchuk, one of my newspaper route customers, lived two or three blocks away from our place. She ended up with breast cancer and a mastectomy. When I would come to the door to collect, I saw a very gloomy, frail, lonely person. She was the only one I heard of with cancer in all those years, in a town of 5,000 people, not that there weren't others, of course.

My, how the quality of life and medicine would advance in a half century for North Americans, after the Cancer Society sucked billions out of the gullible, so that it is now nearly one in two who will contract cancer!

## Particle - "The Dance of Death"

That is what the *Regina Leader Post* called it in a tiny article about the death of my father's father, Michael Hafichuk. He died while dancing at the King's Hotel in Dauphin during a celebration of their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. I was at the Grange Café with my friends, when Park Chow, the owner, a rather cynical fellow, shouted to me in his Chinese accent, "Ey, Ahfeechok, you granfadah jes drop dea' at King Otel!"

What a way to break such news to a kid! I thought he was teasing, but why would he tease about something like that? He was serious, and I was incredulous and annoyed.

The King's Hotel was just across the street from the Grange. I dashed over, found that there had indeed been a tragic event, and ran home ten blocks away. Sure enough, my grandfather, at age 72 and considerably overweight, died of a heart attack while dancing.

## Particle - Omens and Spirits

Before Grandpa died, it was reported in the family that, as he lay on the floor, he wanted to speak to someone. Two of his daughters-in-law spoke of how they were able to see a demon trying to pass from him to another vessel. For this reason, they did not wish to come near him.

There were omens in the days and weeks leading up to my grandfather's passing. That morning at Catholic Mass held in my grandparents' honor (for their anniversary), I was told there were two tapered candles on the altar in front of them as they renewed their marital vows. While one candle

burned normally, the other burned swiftly, as if wind was blowing on it (there was no wind). By the time the ceremony was done, one candle had hardly burned while the other was burned up.

My family spoke of other events concerning him that were strange to me. Were these mystical stories true? I can't say because I personally witnessed nothing, but I relate them to demonstrate the kind of elements, mentality, and beliefs that existed in my Ukrainian Catholic family.

Several members in our family had devils, as you will see with my brothers. I have no doubt that my father, mother, sister, cousins, aunts, and uncles had them as well.

### **Particle - My Sixth Injury**

When I was about thirteen or fourteen, playing at my friend Walter Malazdrewich's home, I hung upside down by my legs bent at the knees, on a swingset. Rather strangely (I thought I had done this before, without difficulty), I slipped off the bar, landing on my head. I injured my neck and was very uncomfortable for some time, but I didn't think much of it and didn't receive any treatment.

Years later, my neck would trouble me with severe headaches that could last for days, with pain covering the whole left side of my head and face. It got so that I could not do things most people take for granted. I would also have great bouts of anxiety and depression, though I didn't know the neck injury was the cause. This apparently unfortunate event would turn out to be quite significant in my life - physically, mentally, and socially. And in all this, there was a spiritual purpose at work.

### **Particle - An Elderly Jewish Friend**

I recall two men who touched me in my early days in town. One was Mr. Boroditzky, a friendly elderly Jewish fellow who had opened the A&W Drive-In. He took a liking to me and when I came around for a root beer or Papa burger, he treated me generously. Younger people don't know the impact one can have on children, whether for good or for evil. I guess that's an attractive feature to kids of grandpas and grandmas - they tend to have more understanding!

### **Particle - Nice if Kids Knew**

Another lesson, although learned many years later: I did not understand at the time, but now I see that Mr. Boroditzky was lonely, that he appreciated me, and I wish I had not been the usual careless, self-centered kid. So now I try to impress upon my son the importance of the feelings of adults, how they can indeed be interested in kids for good, and that kids ought to try to be interested in them because they could use some affection, too.

I know it is a hard and perhaps impossible lesson, but as lessons and words in my childhood made an impression on me to bear fruit later in life, so my hope is that my counsel will make an impression on a presently disinterested young soul I love.

Regrettably, children are counseled today to beware of strangers and casual adults, our society having degenerated to a rather dismal level with violence and sexual depravity and disregard for youth. Yet I now know, as you will plainly see, God is over all and He determines all things, both good and evil.

### **Particle - The Elders Know**



My father urged me, at times, to visit certain older people, saying how much they would enjoy seeing me. I could not comprehend how that was so. Why would they want to see *me*? Now I understand, and I'm sorry I did not follow my father's advice. I do recall that whenever I visited any of them, they were quite receptive and glad.

I shake my head. Why didn't I understand? Why do we learn so late in life? I appreciate the mock German saying, "Ve get too soon oldt, und too late shmardt."

#### Particle - **I Won! I Earned, and I Won!**

The other man I recall with some nostalgia was Wally Foreman, the agent for the *Winnipeg Free Press* for our area. He was also a Jew.

The paper held contests for trips for the paperboys. If I were to get something like 30 to 50 three-month subscriptions to the paper, I could automatically win a trip to the Seattle World's Fair, all expenses paid. Being in a small town, there was very little chance of that. But Wally took a liking to me, saw that I could talk and sell, and took me with him to all the little towns round about, promising me that if I signed people up, I would get the trip.

It seemed unfair to the kids in the small towns that I would get the credit for the signups, seeing those were in their territories, but Wally knew they had very little or no chance because only subscriptions accumulated over many areas would suffice for any boy to win. Besides, they would earn the commissions on those I signed up.

Wally knew what he was doing, enjoyed having me do the legwork, and took me under wing. We worked hard; he drove me around, night after night, and I won, or should I say earned, the trip. I was very excited. (I enjoyed the scent of his cigars, too!)

I learned another lesson. It is not always skill or hard work, but the unmerited favor one receives of another, that brings opportunity, success, and achievement.

On the train, the district superintendent for the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Mr. Jimmy Trifinov, questioned me on how I got the trip. Just *what* did we do, and exactly *how* did we do it? Did Wally Foreman and I promise other kids the possibility of winning the trip with the subscriptions for which I received credit? Wally had taken care of that, too. He had already advised me how to answer.

But the truth was that we had not promised anyone else would win the trip, and I knew those kids in the small towns stood no chance unless someone had done for them what Wally did for me. Wally, being the agent for the territory, was the only one who would or could do that. He couldn't do it for all, I was the one granted that favor, and everyone involved gained.

Still, I felt a bit guilty, not sure of the right and wrong of it. The main concern of the officials seemed to be that I was shown favoritism. But how fair was it for city kids to have the opportunity of making more contacts and sales, while those in the country did not?

#### Particle - **Friends or Relatives - Which?**

While Wally Foreman was the agent for the *Winnipeg Free Press* in rural Manitoba, guess who was the agent in our territory for the other major competitive Winnipeg newspaper, the *Tribune*? None other than another "Wally," but not just any Wally as fate would have it. This Wally happened to be a relative of mine! Now what are the chances of that from a city of 100's of 1000's of people?

So now a quandary began to approach my youthful self. Shouldn't relatives be more important than strangers? It always seemed so to me. So what was I doing on the side against a relative (not that I had ever met him)? What was he doing with the *Tribune* when the *Free Press* was the better newspaper, in my biased mind? And how is it that I looked up to Wally Foreman who I felt was a greater guy than my own uncle? Truly, my relative turned me off; I thought he was a bit of a jerk.

How can these things be? Is there no lasting family loyalty, unity, or harmony? My young naïve mind and heart were perplexed. But then you'll recall my cousin and presumed friend, [Eddy Boyechko](#), not only sided with strangers, but joined them in bullying me in school.

So what does flesh-and-blood family mean? Sometimes a lot, sometimes very little. We've heard the saying, "Blood is thicker than water," which some take to mean that family ties are stronger than friendship ties. Not necessarily so. It depends on conditions, who the family members and friends are, and how long and deeply you've been associated with them. In my youth, I liked Wally Foreman, and I wasn't impressed with my relative Wally - I don't recall his last name; I only recall he was Ukrainian and somewhat inconsiderate and arrogant. I had to get over my mild case of perplexity; it wasn't difficult, but something to think about.

#### Particle - **Being Favored Not My Favorite Fare**

It occurs to me that I don't enjoy being shown special favor for no apparent reason, at least not in all cases. I have always been one to prefer earning or deserving anything I got. Though I didn't see anything wrong with what Wally did for me, I questioned it.

I recall my mother once holding a birthday party for me, though she had not done so for the other siblings, and I was uncomfortable with it.

Years later, I would be shown unimaginable, unmerited favor, as far beyond my dreams as traveling to another galaxy and beyond! And my comparison falls far short of the reality!

#### Particle - **Seattle World's Fair**

Imagine a poor country bumpkin on an all-expense-paid trip, going to the big city of Winnipeg by bus, staying in a fancy hotel downtown (the Marlborough - though by then, it was aging), boarding a train, for the first time, headed to the World's Fair in Seattle, Washington, no less! I was traveling through the Canadian Rockies, sleeping in a berth, riding the revolutionary Monorail, going up the Space Needle, drawing a six-gun with the "fastest gun in the world," while a kind "Indian brave" (he may have been white with makeup) guided me from behind, and going to an exciting science exhibit. These were the highlights of my experience. What a thrill for such a kid - at least in those days!

#### Particle - **Fear of Loss**

I had my mother sew a hidden pocket inside my pants for the bulk of my cash, because I was afraid that pickpockets might get me in the city. And we had to watch our American paper money, because, unlike Canadian currency, it was all the same color. We also had to watch out for unscrupulous ticket sellers who had no regard for children.

A fellow traveler was swindled at a wicket to a sideshow while using a large bill, or so he told us. The world was not necessarily a kind or safe place for the naïve, innocent, or defenseless, yet compared to the world today, it was quite benign.

#### Particle - **My Electromagnetic Performance**

When I visited the science exhibit, I was fascinated with the modern inventions. At a live show there, I was called up to the stage. They were demonstrating electromagnetism, I believe. The man asked me to pick up a suitcase off the floor. I tried and could not budge it. He said, "Try again!" I gave it all I had and went flying partway across the stage. He asked me to set it down and do it again. This time I was cautious, and I could not budge it. Electromagnetism at the touch of a button!

#### Particle - **First Christian Testimony**

After the show, they asked me to come backstage. Being a kid in a strange large city in a foreign country, with strangers and without adult protection, I was leery, wondering why they would want me back there. They wasted little time and attempted to lead me in Scripture to realize my state as a sinner and "accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior." It was the first time I had ever heard the Gospel, as it was presented.

Being a "good Catholic," I was uncomfortable. I was also somewhat afraid, wondering if I was going to make it safely out of there, though I sensed that I was not in true danger. They tried to encourage me to recite "the sinner's prayer" and were not pushy, but patient, tolerant, and kind to me. I expect they saw I was not ready for what they had in mind.

I humored them, accepted the literature, and left as soon as possible. Did they sow seeds that would bear fruit one day? God knows. I received literature from them weeks later at home. My mother questioned me about it, and I disregarded it. I expect she destroyed it.

Who knew that I would be hearing the testimony of the Scriptures and of the love of God for the first time at the World's Fair in Seattle, Washington, USA?

#### Particle - **Rare Repartee**

Back at home...every two weeks, we paperboys had to collect. I had to catch the people at home, and of course, it took much more time to collect than to drop off a paper. Therefore, I had to start several days ahead to collect by the deadline.

One lady complained that I was collecting in full before she received all her papers. "Why is that?" she asked.

"Nobody complains about receiving the paper," I answered, suddenly annoyed, "but some complain when it comes to paying, so it takes much longer and I have to start early to get the job done."

My words were entirely unpremeditated. Some people seem to come up with an effective answer most times. It has always been a rarity for me, so much so that I record this as an extraordinary event. How often have I wished I could always have ready answers that stumped all unreasonable or unthinking adversaries or objectors.

“Touché,” she respectfully replied, “I will pay!”

## Particle - **My Collectables**

A word about collecting in another way - philately - big word. I started collecting used postage stamps when I was perhaps ten years old; nothing sophisticated. I was fascinated with the prospect of having something to do with all those countries around the world.

When we moved into my grandparents' house in Dauphin, I found what I hoped would be a little treasure in our attic, behind the walls where old schoolbooks and other things were stored away. It was a stamp album that belonged to my father's younger brother, Uncle Ernie. There were many stamps in it that I did not have. Although there was no value to them, because they were glued into the album, it was exciting just to find stamps of Queen Victoria and King Edward VII of England.

Numismatics - another big word. At about this time, I also began to collect American and Canadian coins. Of the American, though I would collect all coinage, I particularly enjoyed the Lincoln pennies and Indian head/buffalo nickels from the different mints, and silver dollars.

Of the Canadian coins, I collected the large quarter-size pennies, having the Queen Victoria one I had found years before, the small pennies from 1920 on, the tiny old nickels that were smaller than today's dimes, the larger ones, including the bronze wartime “V” (victory) nickels, and all the other denominations, along with quarters, half dollars, silver dollars, twenty-five cent paper bills (shinplasters), and one and two dollar bills.

Uncle Fred Hafichuk got into coins, as well as our friend, Myron Komarniski. We often traded. I finally sold my entire set to Myron for \$350. For a kid like me, that was a fair bit of money then. Coins were at the peak in value at that time, a value that would decrease from there and not recover for decades.

Why do we collect things? I collected stamps, coins, *Classics Illustrated* comics, and *Whitman* books. People collect everything one can imagine. Why? I think acquisition and control is in our nature. Somehow we feel we have power, security, or worth, as if we have achieved something when we try to collect it all. Perhaps it is a form of reach for the eternal.

But there was something curious about collecting. If I found it or had it given to me, there was pleasure, but when I began to buy to add to my collection, the prime enjoyment, the “magic” of it was gone. Why was that? Was it because I was cheap? I don't think so. I think it was the enjoyment of chancing on treasure.

## Particle - **Esperanto**

One of our high school teachers, Mr. Shevkenyk, an eccentric, practical, and disciplined man in his late 40's or early 50's, believed in eating and living healthily. He would often bring up these subjects in his science classes. He could do fifty pushups in one minute - on one hand.

One of his ambitions was to promote the proposed universal language of Esperanto. He believed it was the logical language of the future. My first language was Ukrainian, then I learned English, and we studied French in school. I enjoyed languages. Then I was introduced to this one, which was simple, well-engineered, logical, practical... but not very popular.

There were no more than about a half dozen of us, in the whole school of perhaps 700 students, who showed interest. We, as ground floor students, would be key persons in this great endeavor, Mr. Shevkenyk promised. Esperanto would deliver mankind from the confusion of miscommunications and the waste of duplication, saving us the high cost in time and energy involved in learning, employing, and translating hundreds of languages. He was persuaded one common language might do much to restore mankind to harmony and sound understanding of one another, the possible key to world peace.

It sounded good, but there was one problem. Even in youth I sensed (though I was not conscious of it) that Esperanto is like an artificial houseplant - while not requiring fertilizer, water, pruning, or repotting, it can't produce flowers, fruit, or anything new. Everything is perfectly predictable. People cannot countenance total lack of variety, perhaps especially with language. Languages are living and organic. Esperanto is sterile. It is like a robot that can walk, speak, see, hear, and gather information, but it cannot think, reason, feel, sense, imagine, relate, or love.

Having learned this Bible story at church, I wondered how Mr. Shevkenyk and others might presume to reverse God's work of confounding the languages at the Tower of Babel. Esperanto certainly didn't get going with us - it lasted for three or four classes and finally fizzled.

### **Particle - My Favorite Sport**

Uncle Fred Hafichuk took me golfing when I was about fourteen, and I fell in love with the sport. I longed to get out to the Dauphin course after school and weekends. He taught what he knew and, as I progressed, Stan Homeniuk, the shop pro, suggested that I take lessons because I showed promise of becoming a pro. My cynical self suggested he did that for the money he might make on lessons.

Myron Komarniski often picked me up after school at the Collegiate, and we raced out to the golf course ten miles away, in his Mercury, at 90 miles an hour, dodging potholes on a two-lane highway to meet our tee time.

The spirit of golf captivated me. If someone had seriously encouraged me to go pro, I would have gone for it, at least for a while; however, when I saw the practice Stan went through, I had second thoughts. In having to do the same, I think that in time I might have lost the enjoyment, that magic feeling.

Why do we take the pleasure out of things we enjoy by this compulsion to achieve, perfect, compete with, and prevail over, ourselves and others? Why, after all that work, do we discover that we sought for fulfillment in yet another dead-end alley? Are not fame and fortune frauds in this world? Or are **we** the frauds?

### **Particle - Other Sports**

When trying out for the football team, I could not understand how to play my defensive position, and I was eliminated at the first tryout. I was humbled but thankful for it. I figured football was an injury guaranteed to happen, and to me, it just wasn't worth it. I knew that Uncle Fred had broken his wrist playing high school football.

I enjoyed badminton, though. And I joined the high school five-pin bowling league, making it to the Manitoba provincials in Winnipeg.

## Particle - A Terrible Traffic Tragedy

Ron Gulas was one of the fellows in the high school bowling league. For a time he seemed quite reasonable, but then he changed, becoming, well, quite unreasonable. He seemed suddenly and inexplicably set on raising hell. He wasn't a handsome fellow, and he didn't have what one would esteem a desirable personality, though I didn't have a problem with him.

He bought a convertible and was determined to take girls for a ride and show off. It was reported by those who rode with him that he was a reckless and arrogant driver. Ron was warned by others to drive responsibly, but he wouldn't listen. People were warned not to go with him, lest something should happen.

On February 14th, 1964, Valentine's Day, Ron picked up three girls after school - Lynn Lozinski, Linda Buchy, and Liz Kitlarchuk - and headed out on the highway south of Dauphin. Not watching where he was going, and likely in his usual rash attitude, they suddenly ploughed under a stopped school bus, his car replacing the bus' rear axle. Perhaps in an attempt to miss at the last moment, Ron swerved to the left and barely spared his own life, but the girls were instantly killed - decapitated, I heard. Ron was mangled and in the hospital and physiotherapy for a long time thereafter, not to mention the burden on his conscience thereafter. One would think so.

What a shock to Dauphin! Yet we heard reports that Ron was defiant and cynical about the whole tragic event. He was a pariah in the community thereafter. I never talked to him about these things. He and I had mutually strayed apart as casual friends well before the collision.

In June 2012, Anne Saley got in touch with me after reading this account. She said Ron had offered her and her friend, Lillian Saari (now Delafuente), a ride that day and they ignored him. Ann and her friend look back at the event as having been protected from above. I agree.

## Particle - Guys

I was an introvert and therefore some of my friends were introverted, though I had every kind of friend. I want to name a few:

Jim Danyluk taught me to make a wooden cribbage board coffee table, but it warped, having been green wood. I enjoyed his company, though I went on to other friends for something more.

Jerry Manchur was a quiet fellow who lived in the corner house next door to us. He lived with his recently widowed mother. There was a sadness there I did not comprehend or pay attention to at my age.

Peter Bzowy was a rather quiet, shy boy. His father had also died prematurely. Peter lost some fingers in handling dynamite on their farm. He lived with his poor, sad mother and sister in a very modest home, otherwise called a shack. Peter was never without his old bicycle, and he won a glorious bike race at the Dauphin Collegiate Technical Institute Track and Field Day, leaving the closest ones **beyond** the dust by at least a quarter-mile lap. Several quit the race long before it was over. I was glad for him.

Wally Malazdrewich had a sense of humor and wit, and we enjoyed each other's company. He admired his older brother, Larry, who was a lady's man and DJ with our local radio station, CKDM. Wally was the friend with whom I received my ill-fated neck injury.

Wayne Bosiak was my age - considerate, generous, and humorous. He was also effeminate (not homosexual that I knew), and he was often teased, if not scorned, for the way he was. He had a sister, Gwen; I appreciated them both.

Ralph Beattie was a guy with a peculiar sense of humor. We played badminton.

Ernie Gidilewich was my age and in my ninth grade class. He, Frank Sklepowich, and I became known as the "three musketeers" - we did things together, were in the same class, all Ukrainian, same size, same sense of humor, and same interests.

### **Particle - Girls**

Girls? I was always struggling in that department.

The prettiest of them all, a living Barbie doll, Florence Yaschyshyn, once invited me to her place to discuss Ukrainian Youth Club executive business. I was president and she was secretary-treasurer. Her parents were not home. She pulled out the wine and made her moves. While I accepted the wine, I was too shy to take her up on so much as a kiss.

Linda Boyko was a wild one with whom I went steady when I was in the rock band (described in next particle). She later tried to betray me; a girl warned me of Linda's plans to dump me at a beach party and join to Bill Brayshaw, who liked Linda - he would have to dump his steady. I canceled going, avoiding the public humiliation, thankful for having been warned. Linda went ahead with her plans and Bill dumped his steady and went with Linda. His girlfriend was distraught.

At least for my part, thanks to a concerned girl's consideration, Linda's plot had been foiled. I would never go back to her again, though she tried to reunite with me. She married Bill years later, and he became a member of the Ontario Provincial Police.

Marlene Koroscil was another extraverted girl, pretty and lively. She was offended by advances I made at a party, and she left me because of that. I didn't blame her.

Thelma Kozak was an intelligent girl who seemed to indicate she enjoyed my company enough for courtship, but I wasn't interested. I was looking for some adventure, safe adventure, a tall order (I don't know that safe adventures are a reality).

I had respect for Thelma and her parents. Her father, Metro, taught French in tenth grade, and he once abruptly shouted a chill into me when I was talking in class. Her mother, Nancy, was the conductor of the Ukrainian Catholic choir. Hearing me sing tenor in harmony with others, she encouraged me to join the choir and soon instructed me to sing the tenor solo "Otche Nash" ("Our Father") in Mass at church.

I went around with a shy Ukrainian girl, Marianne Wuin, for a while, but lost interest. Later, I learned she ended up with a child out of wedlock (not mine).

I also dated Beverly Barrie.

There were several girls I would have wanted to date, but I did not have either the opportunity or the nerve to pursue them. I had a crush on some of them, Jackie Lesyshyn for one, a girl in our eighth grade class at Smith Jackson. She was too extraverted for me.

Several girls had crushes on me, but I was either not interested or too shy. Some mistook my shyness for arrogance.

### **Particle - The Power of Music**

Ed Koshowski, a good-looking, popular Ukrainian Catholic high school student with a guitar (and convertible) was trying to get a music group going and invited me to sing with him. I remember one of the first songs we sang, a popular one - "Stewball," recorded by Peter, Paul, and Mary, a popular folk group in the 60's. This was my entrance into the music world for a while.

The curious thing about that song was that to me, the tone or mood just didn't match the lyrics. The music was rather melancholy and sentimental, while the words were quite stupid. I remember singing the song with gravity and emotion, harmonizing with Ed Koshowski and a girl, but if one were to pay attention to the words more than the music (I never did), one would have to laugh - or gag.

That is the power and magic of music. One can sing the most idiotic words, but by matching them up with sentimental music or music of a mood contrary to the words, the spirit of the music wins out, hands down.

### **Particle - Recurring Nightmare of High School and Hospital Confusion**

In high school, I began to have other recurring dreams.

Strange social and complex circumstances were never easy for me. The Dauphin Collegiate, with its new wing attached, caused confusion in my mind, as did the hospital where I spent some summers working. Somehow the complexity (to me) of layouts caused an uncomfortableness in my mind. The two institutions combined to form a recurring nightmare of trying to find my way through physio and cancer wards (with smells and illness atmosphere included), school classrooms, long halls, and even shopping malls.

Often in the process, I was searching for a clean public washroom, which was hard to find. In the shopping mall portions, I tried to pass through by going out their back doors, but I could never find my way. Added to this mix would be the MIT I later attended. My mind is challenged with such things, which seem as nothing to others. Am I the only one to be so impacted by such circumstances?

### **Particle - Recurring Nightmare of Dilapidated Storage Warehouses**

In this nightmare, I was trying to get to another part of Dauphin. A section of old warehouses stood in the way, some abandoned, but all seemed to have some sort of material stored in them - grain, lumber, crates, or refuse. I had to find my way through a maze of those buildings.

Sometimes a shortcut led me to a dead end. Sometimes I had to climb over piles of rubble to get to a small open window and try to crawl out. There were railroad tracks, it was dark, and sometimes there were gangs of criminals roaming about, which I had to avoid for my life. I would never find my way out of the dark, dreary, entrapping, foreboding maze. By fire, this dream would be removed with the others.

### **Particle - Recurring Nightmare of Dirty Toilets**



I suspect I developed this nightmare while in school. I would be searching for a clean stall, invariably finding an unflushed toilet with a filthy seat. Perhaps one out of three stalls might not be clean. Sometimes I found a plugged toilet, overflowing onto the floor with its vile contents.

I experienced these types of things when in high school and at other public washrooms. When I went to a public toilet, I often hoped it would not stop up on me - I would have found it quite embarrassing (it likely happened to me).

In the nightmare, I would try perhaps two or three washrooms before I found a clean toilet, and one with privacy; often the toilet was somewhat in the open where passersby could see everything. I wondered how this could be, and of course, in real life, at least where we have lived, it was not so. This nightmare and others would be taken care of with one fell swoop, for a time, at least.

#### **Particle - Recurring Nightmare - Where to Pee?**

In this nightmare, I would search everywhere for a private place to pee, having to go so badly. I think this kind of dream develops when one must go while sleeping, but also as a result of unpleasant real experiences, which most have had. This would be taken care of.

You might be surprised how it happened that these dreams disappeared all of a sudden. No, it was not by hypnotism, drugs, electric shock treatment, lobotomy, or Alzheimers, though it was indeed a rough experience.

#### **Particle - Better Dreams of Faith Flying**

There is one kind of dream I had as a kid on the farm and later as well, a pleasant one. It is one I know several others have had - flying, naturally, without any manmade apparatus. The success of flying was dependent on willpower or faith. More than once I flew straight for the barn and barely skimmed the top of it. Straining at my willpower was like pulling back on the controls in a plane, but the more I relaxed and believed, the better I did. What a wonderful feeling! Where does that come from?

Another dream I still have to this day is one of smoothly, swiftly sliding down the stairs, floor after floor, with my feet barely touching the edges of the steps. Sometimes in my waking hours I almost think I can do it, so real it can be. I have also dreamt of taking long steps on level ground while running. I could hold my feet up with concentration and go for dozens of yards without touching the ground.

#### **Particle - The School of Hard Knocks**

There was a tough fellow, Ken Taylor, who had been a delinquent, having spent time in reform school, an institution where unmanageable, law-breaking kids were sent to be rehabilitated in those days. He was slim and over six feet tall.

One day he lost it with his chemistry teacher, Mr. Konopski. He wrapped his left hand in Mr. Konopski's necktie and gave him a right to the face. I was not there; my cousin Ed reported the incident and it was publicized throughout the school. My cousin was typically delighted with the event, unable to keep from chuckling; yes, the same one who laughed hysterically when I "bled like a pig" seven years earlier at Riverbend.

I secretly enjoyed what I heard, and so did others. Mr. Konopski plainly did not like me, and he was not afraid to show it, ridiculing me in front of class one day. I thought he got what was coming to him. He did ease up a bit after that. Sometimes, teachers need to be taught lessons.

### **Particle - A Taste of Insecurity**

I was at cousin Ed Boyechko's home when we saw President John Kennedy's assassination. I think we were watching Walter Cronkite. That event on Friday, November 22, 1963 had a profound impact, reminding us of our frailty. If the President of the United States with all his security - the Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful military in the world can get killed, what chance did any of us have?

I felt a sense of insecurity, wondering if war with the USSR was about to break out. After all, we had just had the Cuban missile crisis with Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro.

It is interesting how we expect our perceived heroes to live and villains to be vanquished. Kennedy was loved by many, while Castro was demonized. A remarkable thing is that Castro would survive **many** more American presidents.

### **Particle - An Accurate Aptitude Analysis**

I remember doing an aptitude test in high school. If I recall correctly, there were about 750 questions to be answered. When done, my results showed that I was inclined toward a peculiar mixture of vaudeville, the priesthood, and farming. For many years to come, I would proceed in none of those directions as an occupation, but was I in for a surprise!

### **Particle - St. Vladimir's Minor Seminary**

Going to the Dauphin Collegiate Technical Institute for high school, I gradually became concerned that my schooling suffered because of many conflicting interests. What to do? I had heard of St. Vladimir's College, a Ukrainian Catholic boy's boarding school, which was a minor seminary in Roblin, Manitoba, sixty miles west of Dauphin. It was operated by the Redemptorist order of priesthood. I thought that if I went there, I could concentrate on studies and return to the good marks I used to have in my first grades of school.

### **Particle - Running from Reality**

In retrospect, I see that during this time, there was an unconscious search at work in me, calling me to something I could not identify. It was an opportunity to test the waters for the priesthood.

I believe I had another motive for going to St. Vladimir's. I think it is a motive that many have who go into priesthood or ministry. It was a matter of avoiding the real world. I was insecure, with low self-esteem. I think that, subconsciously, I said to myself, "Self (kidding - remember Flip Wilson?), if I go to this private boy's school, I won't have to deal with girls and other social challenges, and if I become a priest, I will have shelter from the realities of life. I won't have to compete and fail in society in the everyday activities and problems. I will simply counsel others on what to do and how." (Isn't it said that unsuccessful people become consultants?)

It is one thing to preach; it is another to live and do. I understand that stress levels, divorce, depression, and illness are high in the ministry. They think to get an easy ride or have a sure

hideaway, but all they get is an abundance of problems, a multiplication of that which they couldn't handle and tried to avoid.

#### Particle - **Religious Regulation and Regimen**

I attended St. Vladimir's College for the eleventh grade in 1962. School started with about sixty students, and less than forty remained at year's end. We lived on campus with several priests. One of these was Reverend Wiwchar, the college Prefect who demanded perfection and discipline. He made things rather uncomfortable. He could be very nice, but he could also be very critical and demanding. He was in the habit of eavesdropping on us by a highly sensitive two-way speaker system throughout the building complex and grounds. More than once, I and others were caught with ill-advised conversation.

Many Catholics go to Mass only once or twice a year - at Christmas and Easter (besides baptisms, weddings, and funerals). We went to church services four times a day, seven days a week. The first service was at 6:55 AM. A loud bell in the dormitory awakened us at 6:30. We hurriedly washed up in public washrooms and headed down the long cement hall joining the dorm to the chapel for Mass, then back down the hall to the refectory for breakfast at 7:45, followed by housekeeping duties at 8:30, and classes from 9:00 till noon.

At noon, we headed down the long hall to the chapel for prayers, back up the hall to lunch, then to classes from 1:00 till 4:00. We had chores and sports till we went to chapel again at 5:45, then to supper at 6:00. After supper, it was study from 7:00 to 8:30, some recreation and leisure time till 9:30, back down the long hall for evening services in the chapel, and finally back to the dorm to be lulled to sleep by Perry Como's "Ave Maria," and lights out by 10:30, Monday to Friday. We got to sleep in until 7 or 7:30 on Saturday mornings, but we still attended church.

The main recreational activities in the school were hockey, pool, and music. Boys came from all over North America, and there were some tough dudes from places like Chicago, Detroit, New York, and other northeastern US cities, whose parents sent them there in despair. Those boys did not last long, most of them contemptuous of the disciplinary and religious atmosphere.

I didn't know if I could last the year, but I did. I was glad to leave, knowing I was not going into the priesthood. For the next year or so, I had recurring nightmares of walking down that long hall. Some wonder if there had been physical and/or sexual abuse there. There was none during my time, none whatsoever. The priests treated us very well, conducting themselves with integrity, as far as I could tell.

Besides Michael Wiwchar, I recall priests Thaddeus Krawchuk, Lawrence Dybka, Michael Bzdel, George Perejda, and a couple of others, whose names I do not remember. There were also two "Brothers," (a position of semi-priesthood) and Paul Lukie, a lay teacher, all of whom treated us well.

There was, however, one minor questionable incident...

#### Particle - **Collective Correction**

Every morning before classes, we had our cleaning chores. One day the equipment closet was locked and the key was missing. Eventually, a locksmith was brought in to open the door.

There was no one person responsible for the closet. It was determined that it could only have been locked deliberately. Nobody would own up to the prank, however, so it was decided to cancel all privileges, including sleep, for everyone, until the guilty party confessed. Except for those who were out of town playing hockey, we were up all night on our knees, scrubbing floors, but nobody admitted to any wrong.

The question is, “Should we all have been punished for a wrong **one** committed without our knowledge?” Perhaps it was concluded that it was a conspiracy shared by many, but I was not aware of it. I don’t know that anything was solved or resolved.

### **Particle - Seminary Students**

I recall most of the students: Les Storozuk, Peter Pidskalny, Wesley Shewchuk, Russell Maksymetz, Walter Zulak of Winnipeg, Ron Wizniak of Roblin, Ron Tyszhinski, Ted Hafichuk (my cousin), Ernest Hlady, Eugene Buchko, Larry Sawaryn, Yaraslow “Yogi” (an orphaned immigrant; I don’t recall his last name), Emil Boychuk, John Muzyka, Vladimir Panio, Henry Derkach, Gerald Gazdewich, Dennis Wawrykow, Zanie Sadoway of Dauphin, Bobbie Ewankiw, James Short, Franko Szadiak from The Pas, Manitoba, Julian Klaczinski from Omaha, Steve Bahrij from Omaha (whose name I forgot and just recalled in 2017!), Wayne from Chicago, Freddie (Federowich?) from Detroit, Orest Woloski from Manitoba, Laurence Danko from Winnipeg, Ernest Siwak from Angusville, Ron Lukie from Grandview, Lawrence Tkach from Manitoba, Robert Kuspira from Yorkton, Lawrence Hukalo from Edmonton, Al Babiuk from Swan River, and Mike Klimchuk from Transcona of Winnipeg. There were also Jerry Lysowych of Montreal, who was there only part of the year (I believe he became ill and couldn’t continue) - a heavy-set fellow, quite friendly, Roman Wojtowicz, who was there a short time, and a heavysset fellow we called, “Doc” whose name I don’t recall.

### **Particle - Shark without Blood**

I had learned to play pool from scratch at the seminary, taught by a “shark,” Lawrence Tkach, only to beat him in the final championship tournament at the end of the year, to my surprise and his chagrin. Was there a trophy or prize? No. How else could I have won? Well... I did win the trip to the Seattle World’s Fair (though I worked for it).

### **Particle - Vile Imaginations and More Vile Audacity**

At one time, some of us were to put on a play. I wanted to do something radical and bold, so I arranged a script wherein sexual perversion of fornication was a theme. It was a fit of madness, I think. I still remember some of the details. I would grow to be very ashamed of that day, though nobody rebuked me for it, not even the Prefect, who sat there watching it, but never saying a word. The message wasn’t all that subtle, so I find it hard to believe he would not discern the implications. Perhaps he didn’t wish to divulge that he understood. I often wondered how I could possibly have done such a thing.

### **Particle - Monsignor Murray**

Monsignor Athol Murray was a radical, brash, entertaining priest who ran a boy’s school in Wilcox, Saskatchewan. He was known for several vices - a foul mouth, drinking, and chain smoking five packs a day. He was also quite overweight and was not always very nice with the boys. He visited us one day and gave a talk. Some of the priests were quite impressed with his humor, gall, and brazen ways. Even in those days, I wondered what a priest was all about, doing those things. I understood he coached a formidable hockey team.

## **Particle - Debut in Hockey**

I learned to play hockey at St. Vlad's, which began to excite me. But when Coach Wiwchar let me on the ice for my first game against an out-of-town team, I immediately tripped on a crack and fell. He took me off and kept me off - my hockey career ended, off ice and "on ice" at once, forever. I didn't cry - I just unlaced my skates and walked off into the sunset. Gretzky, I was not.

## **Particle - Greater Horizons with the Guitar**

I learned some guitar at St. Vladimir's, and when I returned to Dauphin, my cousin Ted and I were invited to perform at a St. Viator's Roman Catholic youth social one evening. We sang "Sheila" and perhaps one or two of the Everly Brothers' tunes.

Bob Barrow, a young Manitoba Telephone Systems employee and guitarist in the audience, approached me later and asked if I wanted to form a rock band. I was surprised and delighted, though I told him I could hardly play. "I'll teach you," he replied. We began practicing at the DCTI. Bob played Stratocaster lead, I played rhythm on a seventy-dollar Sears electric guitar and amp (my fingers wore perpetual creases), and Bob Young from high school, whom I had never met previously, played drums.

After about six practices, Barrow decided we were ready to entertain and make money. I knew he was ready, but I was far from it. Nevertheless, he made the decision; we rented the town hall and held a dance for teens about once a month. He persuaded me to sing, and my first song was "The House of the Rising Sun," my voice occasionally cracking on the high note, and the next, "Stand By Me."

We made some good money (to me) as young fellows and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. I soon upgraded to a Fender Stratocaster I ordered from John Zabiaka of Dauphin Musical Supplies. On Bob Young's suggestion, we dressed in dark brown slacks, white shirts, narrow brown knit ties, and beige sports jackets.

We called ourselves "The Rebel Rousers." In jackets and ties? I guess there are lots of antisocials in jackets and ties today - the IMF, CIA, FDA, CFR, The Fed, AMA, WTO, WHO, UN, American bankers....

It was not long before Bob Barrow left, having found a girlfriend, Myrna. His leaving greatly disappointed us. Today I look back with appreciation for what he did for me. Being in that band opened up a part of me for the better. I had been introverted all my life.

Though I wanted the spotlight and attention, I was shy and uncomfortable with it. I knew I was not free. Somehow I needed something.

## **Particle - A New Friend**

We began holding practices on our own, and soon, with Weldon Jensen joining on rhythm guitar and Jim Puls (Bob's friend) on bass, we were holding dances again and enjoying it immensely. Jim and I became close friends, and I grew to appreciate his parents, whom his friend Bob dubbed, "Sweet Cy" and "Sweet Mae," because of Mr. Puls' apparently not-so-sweet disposition.

Jim bought LPs by the Ventures and loved them, teasing me about playing like them. Comparing my ability to theirs, on a scale of 1-10, I would give myself about a 0.1 - maybe, but I made efforts at "Walk Don't Run," "Telstar," "Pipeline," and the Surfaris' "Wipeout." Our audiences didn't seem to mind.

#### **Particle - One of Those Curious Twists in Life**

You'll recall the "Dairy Devil," the man my family feared at dairy inspection time. And now here I was, as fate would have it, a close companion with Cy Puls' youngest son Jim, teaching him to play base and frequently visiting with Mr. and Mrs. Puls at their home.

#### **Particle - Sweet Cy's Humor**

Yes they called him "Sweet Cy" for his gruff, demanding, opinionated manner, but he also had a sense of humor. Nearly every time Jim and I got together at his place, he would tell me a joke. The one I remember:

"Victor, there was this guy who boasted that he could pee anytime he wanted to - no problem. He went on boasting until, finally, someone decided to take him up on it: 'You say no matter what time of day it is, or how often you go, you can pee any time you want to?'"

'That's right, anytime I want to, no matter when.'

'OK,' his friend said, 'ten dollars says you can't do it - pee right now'."

Then, with a twinkle in his eye, Cy would nonchalantly produce the punchline:

"'I don't want to.'"

#### **Particle - Swan Song at Swan River**

This was one of the greater disappointments of my youth: We decided to expand our horizons beyond Dauphin as performers, so we planned a dance at Swan River, about 100 miles north. We could have used a manager or agent, someone experienced at these things. We booked a hall, however, did a little advertising by posters in the town, and that was it.

The day we were to play, we drove up, set ourselves up in the hall, and waited. By starting time, we had two or three girls from the local "out crowd" ...and that was it for the rest of the night! In two hours, we packed up our equipment and headed home.

We later found out that a local band did not take kindly to outsiders, so they tore all our posters down and held their own dance that night. We were very disappointed and disillusioned. Expanding was not going to be so easy.

We decided if we ever tried something like that again, we would let the locals of our host area rent the hall and hire us; otherwise, we were foolish to just walk into a town as strangers with guitars strung across our backs and expect open hearts, arms, and pockets.

Then there was the small matter of being good enough to be in demand.

#### **Particle - A Taste of Attention**

One time, shortly after we brought Jim into the band, the Dauphin high school hired us for the grad dance. We enjoyed ourselves and so did those who came to be entertained. A peculiar thing happened in the last hour: Everyone that was left gathered around the stage and just watched us play. Then they got to talking to us and asking us questions about how it all began for us, what we did, and how we did it. We gave demonstrations on our individual instruments and talked about practice. It really was peculiar. We were “celebrities,” but we were also friends, and everyone was in the mood to enjoy the time.

#### **Particle - Bass Deception**

A fellow in the crowd, Don Demetriuk, was “feeling good,” having been drinking (along with a few others). He was quite taken with how Jim Puls had learned to play bass so well so fast (this was at a time when Jim was just learning to play - I was teaching him). “Wow, you guys really sound good. Adding that bass just does the trick, doesn’t it!” He went on and on about it. The thing was, Jim was faking it, with his bass turned off for most of the night, except for perhaps a couple of numbers. We had him there for show until he learned.

We laughed many times about that night. The power of suggestion is fascinating. People hear what they want to believe! “Believing is hearing”?

#### **Particle - Memphis**

No, we didn’t make it to Memphis as recording stars. The instrumental that impacted me in those days was Lonnie Mack’s “Memphis.” To me, he captured the spirit and essence of the electric guitar and its part in rock and roll. “Memphis” was magic to me, though I never learned how to play it; strangely, I barely tried.

#### **Particle - Poor Old Rich Man**

The town of Dauphin paid a man to clean streets at night. In those years, it was John, an older Ukrainian fellow. He was eccentric, backward, and grubby. He would wear anything at all for clothing. For example, in winter he would not buy himself a pair of winter boots. Instead, he wrapped rag materials around his feet with binder twine. People thought he was poor, yet he had the town job and also worked for Park Chow at the Grange Café as a janitor.

Word came one day that old John had died, leaving behind something like \$100,000, which is closer to \$1 million or more today. A rich man had lived and died as a pauper, leaving it all behind. I don’t even know that he had any family heirs.

#### **Particle - That Which They Feared**

On the farm, Dad often hired Nick and John Yarema, two bachelor brothers, to cut wood, stook sheaves (arrange bundles of grain sheaves together in standing stacks, in preparation for the threshing machine), and help in threshing. They were simple, uneducated men.

I was told they would not take their money to the bank, but would stash it in cans under the floorboards of the little old house in which they lived on the west side of Dauphin, the poor side of town.

One day, their home was broken into and their many years of savings were plundered. I heard that there were many old coins and bills. I wonder how the word got out about the kind of coins and bills unless it came from the thieves, assuming the report is true. I don't believe the Yarema brothers would have talked in those terms.

I saw those men after that. They were very sad. They weren't young any more, and they were in no position to retire.

Do we learn from life's examples? Why did these men lose all their savings? Is bucking the system always wise? Perhaps if you do it for the right reasons and have a viable alternative?

And what are we doing with what we have? Are we living for ourselves only? Is there any guarantee that we will live to spend it? What makes us think thieves will not "break through and steal," that "moth and rust" will not consume what we keep unwisely? Are we trusting and serving God or mammon? What is the wisest and most effective thing we can do with our possessions?

I wish I could say that I took these things to heart, that I learned to govern my life accordingly. I have to say that I didn't.

Some day, we will know who the thieves were and what happened to them.

#### **Particle - More Bachelor Brothers**

We knew another set of bachelor brothers, the Sosnowskis, farmers who owned their grain farm. They lived near Uncle Fred and Aunt Mary's. One brother was several years older than the other. Shocking news came one day that the younger committed suicide. Why do many people suffer in silence and privacy? And why is it the sufferer can't seem to find a listening ear or some kind of help? Was there nobody who could discern what was happening or say anything to him?

#### **Particle - And More Still**

Another set of Ukrainian bachelor brothers, the Ganczers, lived near the Prestaykos, as well. They were twins and alcoholics. It was not uncommon for them to drive into the Prestayko yard, hardly able to walk or talk, telling of their woes and sorrows. Lonely men all these bachelor brothers were, with no wives, no families, no social circles, no friends, and no religious or spiritual convictions - at least not that I was aware.

#### **Particle - Honor Thy Father**

I wanted to buy a \$70 record player so that I could listen to, and learn to play, songs and instrumentals. It was money I had earned, but my father forbade me to buy it. "Why?" I asked. "You don't need it," he replied. The conflict swiftly grew and I got so heated that if my mother had not stepped in, I might have hit him; it was close. I am so very thankful that did not happen. That wouldn't have been something easy for me to live down.

It was strange that he would stand in the way of my pursuing my musical interests, seeing he once had been in a band, played violin and guitar, and had wanted me to do the same. This was a money matter, however. He thought I was spending it foolishly. I disobeyed him and bought it anyway. I don't recall that I got much use out of it, and it ended up lost, broken, or given away. He knew better, and I didn't know he knew better. I don't know that he knew it himself. Whether he knew better or not, God did not bless my disobedience.



The lesson: Obey your parents whether under their roof or otherwise, unless it is illegal or immoral, whether you are married or not. It may not make sense, and you may not like it or agree. They may not be able to explain themselves, but they are almost always, if not always, right, except where they are contrary to the laws of God and His personal directions to you. It is the nature of things.

### **Particle - My First Time Drunk**

Jim Puls, his friend Bill McCallum, Jerry Minarz (coincidentally entering my life again briefly), and I decided to go to a Ukrainian wedding north of Dauphin, in Winnipegosis or Fork River. Uncle Bill Atamanchuk was there. He decided to have some fun, poured me a six-ounce glass of straight whiskey, and strongly urged me to down it all at once, which I reluctantly did. Within 20 minutes or so, the dance hall was spinning around me, and I could hardly stand up. Bill McCallum and Jerry also got drunk; Bill was soon to become an alcoholic.

Jim had the good sense to try to stay somewhat sober, because he had just bought a used Dodge car. While we all survived, the rest of us did not do it without Jim having to stop the car every so often to let us vomit.

### **Particle - The Ciga-route**

Besides drinking and doing drugs, one of many habits I would surely urge anyone to steer very clear of is smoking. I tried it when I was in my early teens, but started on a more regular basis when I was perhaps eighteen. The first time I inhaled was sickening. How strange that people are discomforted, to the point of nausea, by something entirely useless and even harmful, yet continue with it! I suppose they do so in most cases to follow the crowd or mimic admired individuals.

I think actor James Dean had an influence on me when I saw him on a movie billboard, walking the street with a cigarette in his mouth and a summer jacket slung over his back, the image in my mind at the time of a cool, tough, rebellious, street-smart dude.

There is a stretch of time for the novice smoker when he or she thinks to be able to quit anytime. "I'm not addicted," are the famous last words for so many. I said it, believed it, and did not realize the addiction's development was gradual and insidious. It was not long before I was snared.

I smoked Du Maurier, Rothman's, and No. 7's mostly, while my friends had their chosen brands. Why those favorites? I don't know - marketing impact, peer influence, and habit, I guess.

Addiction is a deceptive comforter and powerful enemy. Imagine - we pay murderers to kill us and help them do it!

### **Particle - Life Ever in the Balance**

I had a rude awakening to the realities of this world in a rather striking way one night. Some friends and I decided to go to a Ukrainian dance in Valley River, ten miles northeast of Dauphin. While there was music, dancing, and drinking inside, some of us were outside, drinking and talking. Suddenly, we saw a tall man go berserk.

He went into a rage, looking around to see what or whom he could hit, spotted me standing alone, and rushed for me. I knew I had but one choice - run, and run I did. It seemed like I could easily do

100 yards in less than 10 seconds. I did not look back once, heading for protection or concealment anywhere. When I finally stopped and looked, he was back on the scene where he had spotted me, bashing the trunks of cars with his forearm. He was strong and wild; nevertheless, men soon took control of him and led him away.

I thought, “How is it someone that dangerous is allowed to mingle freely at social gatherings? Someone could have been badly maimed or even killed! How is this allowed to happen?” Along with the Kennedy assassinations, it was one of my first realizations that there are no guarantees of safety from grave danger anywhere in this world.

I later learned the man was known to do such a thing from time to time, especially when he got drunk. He appeared to be in his thirties, a bachelor, the son of farmers who took care of him, perhaps because of some mental handicap.

It would take me years, more unpleasant experiences, and deep change to realize that some places and events pose more danger than others, places where alcohol flows freely, entertainment is the purpose, and wiser people do not go.

### **Particle - Stalling Sleep**

While I was working at the hospital as a janitor for my father during summer break, Jim Puls got the idea that we go without sleep for as long as possible. I managed to do it for over three days. It got so I could almost sleep standing and leaning on my mop. (Come to think of it, I am not sure Jim went without, as he claimed; I didn’t actually witness it - he was one to pull stunts like that.)

I would not advise anyone to go without sleep unless absolutely necessary. I began to feel, not only sleepy, but strange in a not-so-good way.

### **Particle - More to Life than Skill and Pay**

There came a time when Jim and I wanted to do more with our rock band, but Bob and Weldon were not able or willing to commit themselves to increased practice. My cousin Ted had begun another band in town. They had a lead guitarist, Jerry Syrnick, and a drummer, Morris Ficzytz, who were rather impressive to us. I didn’t think there was room enough in our small town for one band, never mind two.

A cunning and devilish idea came to mind. Jim and I would form a new band with Jerry and Morris, assuming they were interested in hard work and doing something serious with music, which they seemed to be. This would give us a crack at our ambition and eliminate competition, too. I would also be able to sing and not have the pressure of playing lead guitar at the same time (which is often difficult, even impossible).

We met with Jerry and Morris, who, as it turned out, also wanted to do more than they were doing and than their band members were willing. They decided to join us. We notified Bob and Weldon, who were offended, Jerry and Morris notified their members, and together we started the new band.

But I didn’t feel right about it. Though we got along, it didn’t go far. The “mix” wasn’t there, and we had abandoned our friends, though we had apparent justifications for doing what we did. That was one of the regrets in my life. I am sorry I did it. Several years later, Bob and Weldon referred to that time in bitterness.

Another lesson: Don't go against your inner instincts, no matter how advantageous it may seem. It is never worth it. It is not about accomplishment, gain, power, or glory; it is about people. Life's rewards are in direct proportion to how well we treat our neighbors.

I have spoken of a treacherous cousin - Ed. Wasn't I a treacherous cousin to Ted? And Ted joked about it years later - he never held it against me.

### Particle - **Illegalities, Illegitimacies, and Infidelities**

My friends and I had a problem getting alcohol, being under age, so I approached Alf Kennedy, one of my mother's boarders. Alf was a financial advisor and new branch manager of a finance company, and he aspired to advance with it. He was very reluctant to buy us beer, but I talked him into it. "If you get caught, you are not to tell anybody where you got it," he urged. "I could lose my job, my career, and my reputation, you understand."

"Yes, we understand. We won't tell a soul - I promise! Besides, we won't get caught!" I answered confidently.

One day we were drinking at Jim's place and his parents, Cy and Mae, were supposed to be at the lake for the week. They returned early, walked in, and caught us with the glasses and bottles in our hands. Mr. Puls pressured us to tell him where we got the liquor, but we wouldn't say. Finally, he threatened to summon the police, who would charge us and investigate to identify our source. He said it would be much better for us and for our supply friend if we confessed, so we did.

Mr. Puls met with Alf Kennedy at the hospital where Mr. Puls worked as health inspector. It was probably one of Alf's most frightening and humiliating moments of his life. I witnessed the confrontation - Alf was literally shaking at the knees. He totally humbled himself as Mr. Puls severely scolded him right in the public hallway. Now Alf was making the promises, and I was willing to bet that, unlike me, he would be keeping his.

I learned that we need to think long and hard about making promises, no matter how much we think we can or will keep them. I was sorry for getting Alf into trouble, and for getting ourselves into trouble - but I was not sorry for drinking. We continued to do so at every opportunity. It was "fun" and "the thing" to do.

### Particle - **Boarders at Home**

My mother took in boarders to supplement our income. I recall several:

Alf Kennedy, who bought us alcohol - once!

Willy Mark, an engineering trainee, a tall, good-looking, sociable Chinese fellow with a sense of humor;

Ken Stevens, a CKDM announcer, guitarist, and singer, who did a Manitoba version of Hank Snow's "I've Been Everywhere, Man," replacing Hank Snow's cities with Manitoba cities;

Martin Freedman, another CKDM announcer, arrogant, selfish, inconsiderate; he was out to slay the world for himself, disregarding common sense and decency. For example, he would boast about how he had such great power by radio, that he could make an audience believe anything. "You can

make them eat sh\_t,” he said. He would date girls, bed them during their menstruation, and expect my mother to launder his bloody shorts.

Don Pepplar and Ken Lewis, a couple of down-to-earth, friendly construction fellows from Saskatchewan;

George Moczulski, an elderly man from the Ukraine, a Catholic who, we were told, escaped the Iron Curtain, leaving behind his family, never to see them again, a very sad man;

Doreen Kowalski, a single woman who would come home late at night and stomp up the stairs in her high heels and drop them with loud thumps on her floor, waking my parents directly below her, in spite of their protests. Her fiancé, Lawrence Chita, rescued my parents by marrying her and getting their own home.

Last, but not least (I say the most), there was the unforgettable...

#### Particle - **William K. Orr**

Bill Orr came from England when he was in his late teens (about two years older than I), took lodging with us, and began working for Beaver Lumber as a management trainee. I was infatuated with him, partly because of his accent. Bill was full of energy, humor, and adventure. He was unafraid of so many things I felt insecure about. He had some popular characteristics, had a way with people, was not afraid to give or take advice, and was not afraid of a scrap (or so he talked - I never saw him in one). I coveted his friendship, but I couldn't keep up with him.

One day our relationship came to an end. He told me that my Uncle Bill Hafichuk, who was a car salesman for Tibby Munro's Dodge/Chrysler dealership, sold him a black 1949 Chevy fastback for an exorbitant price. He said that though he had trusted my father to steer him to a decent deal, he believed that my father and my uncle took advantage of him.

I questioned his allegation and, I suppose, naturally defended my father, saying I did not think he would do such a thing (I really didn't think he would - how naïve of me! Hadn't I learned that his own children couldn't trust him?).

I was not insistent or upset that I recall, but Bill either felt that I was intent on defending my father regardless of the truth, which was not true, or he simply decided to write us off as a family, me included. I think I questioned my father on it, but didn't get anywhere. Bill walked away, resentful.

He stands out as one of the most prized characters in my life. I wish him well. I looked him up in Calgary years later, just after my life had dramatically changed, but he was not at all interested in what I hoped to share with him. I heard he at least partly accomplished his dreams of being successful and wealthy in Calgary, in real estate development.

#### Particle - **Mother's Alleged Nervous Breakdown**

It happened when I was about seventeen years old, on one of my summer breaks. I was working as a janitor for my father, who was Head of Housekeeping at Dauphin General Hospital. My mother fell ill and was admitted. When my father told me, I was shocked and wanted to see her. Then came the second jolt: He told me she didn't want to see me. Then shock number three: She viewed me as the cause of her illness, and the doctor strongly advised I not be permitted to see her.

I didn't understand why my mother blamed me for what we thought to be a nervous breakdown. I was no angel, to be sure, but neither was I much different from any other average teen that I could tell. I was greatly disturbed that she was ill and that she blamed me. Was I somehow responsible? I don't recall anyone telling me how.

Working in the hospital, I didn't resist the temptation to go to her room. I stood in the doorway and said, "Hi." She said, "Hi." I asked her what was wrong and what I had done. I don't recall that she had anything to say. But I think she saw I was disturbed about it. Nothing seemed to get resolved, but it wasn't long before she was home.

Somehow, I knew I wasn't to blame, though I knew I wasn't innocent. There were conflicts between her and Dad, as well. I recall many arguments; Mom was always frustrated with Dad, who was forever doing something she didn't like. I don't recall being aware of anything I did to bring her to such a crisis, though I likely can't deny many things I said and did aggravated her.

Mom was never the same after that. She was subdued and withdrawn. It was like there was nobody home, or at least asleep.

### **Particle - My Catholic Christmases**

As a Ukrainian Catholic, I greatly enjoyed Christmas caroling with the youth club. I enjoyed singing in the choir, especially at Christmas midnight Mass, when Ron Hrehirchuk (my future brother-in-law), others, and I would sneak "mickeys" (flat half quart bottles) of rye whiskey inside our suit jackets to church, take secret sips, get drunk, and sing loudly and joyously.

I loved the food; Ukrainian Christmases and weddings are known for it. I ate so many perogies, holopchi (cabbage rolls), nalesnikes (pancake and cottage cheese rolls with cream), so much khutia (cooked honeyed wheat), turkey, pie, and other dishes that I could hardly make it to the couch to "die-gest." I had to lay there for a couple of hours and recover.

What a sacrilege! What a shame that these things were done in the name of worshipping God, but that is the way I was. Did all do those things? No. Is there true worship of God in the Catholic Church, drunk or sober? Not that I ever knew.

### **Particle - A Momentary Agent for Entertainers**

Because I got to mingle with stage personalities, I enjoyed organizing dances and booking local performers to raise money for the Ukrainian Catholic Youth Club. There was a memorable night with Del Keith Dubbin and his band from Brandon, Manitoba, who were a hit with everyone, though they were nobody famous. One of the numbers they did well, which I always enjoyed, was "You Really Got Me." (Come to think of it, they were the only ones I ever booked.)

### **Particle - Business Administration**

While finishing high school at the Dauphin Collegiate, I wanted to stick with music. Nothing else interested me, but nobody else in the band was interested enough; I did not see sufficient talent in myself or in them, and my parents urged me to continue education. "At least get your schooling first, then decide what to do. If you don't get your schooling now, you likely never will, and you'll live to regret it." And so off I went to Winnipeg to take Business Administration at the Manitoba - not Massachusetts - Institute of Technology (MIT), now known as the Red River Community College.

Why that course? Other than be in a rock band, I had no idea what I wanted to do or be, but that course seemed a practical one and had a diversity of subjects that I thought might give me some idea of what I wanted to do with my life - subjects like law and psychology, which interested me.

It often perplexed me that fellow students in high school seemed to know what they wanted to do in life, but I had no clue for myself, not for years to come.

#### Particle - **Meanwhile, Unbeknownst to Me...**

In this year of 1964, thousands of miles away, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, something was happening with an 8-year-old American Jewish boy. Here is Paul Cohen's recent account of a simple, apparently insignificant, event that year:

"When I was about 8 years old, my mother came into my room as I slept, and I spoke in my sleep, which was not something I regularly did. She told me the next day that I said, quite clearly: 'I feel like a Jewish warrior.' I had no recollection of anything, or a dream, but these words seem significant in light of what the Lord has done with my life."

Paul also had this dream around that time. He writes:

"I dreamt I was in the car with my parents and brother. We were in the city, and around dusk, we stopped at a stop sign or light. I was in the back seat, looking up at the row homes across the street. In the window of one of the homes was a man in what seemed to be a spacesuit. He was looking directly at me, no one else. My parents were not aware of him. I felt like he knew me and had his 'eye on me,' for what, I did not know. There was nothing I or anyone else could do about it. This 'spaceman' seemed to be able to watch me no matter where I went. He was not menacing, but I did not understand and was somewhat frightened. There was also a sense of melancholy.

It could seem the nightmare of a child, but I believe that person was an angel of God watching over me to call me at the appropriate time for God's holy purposes for my life, taking me out of all that I had and knew."

I would not meet Paul for another 15 years, and when I did, it would be halfway around the world in the major trouble spot. This meeting would lead to major developments in our lives.

#### Particle - **"No Retail for You"**

My last year in Dauphin, I was a grocery boy at Eaton's. My manager, Mr. Paul, decided to give me some advice before I left for college. He said, "Whatever you do, don't go into retail. It is a dog-eat-dog business." Why did he give me that advice? Obviously he was not happy with it, but was that the case with all retailers? Would I reject that advice, learning the hard way, or simply do what I was destined to do?

#### Particle - **Brief Big Brother**

There I was, off to the relatively big city, leaving home with some sadness at age 19. Dad arranged for me to go with Ron (Ken) Ksionzyk of Ethelbert, about 3 years my senior. He had been working in Medical Records at the Dauphin General and was slated for training in Medical Records at the Children's Hospital in Winnipeg.

Ron took me under wing. We did some drinking, partying, and double dating together, but in my youthful pride and foolishness, I somehow offended him. After some months, he went his way, and when we occasionally encountered one another thereafter, he maintained a visible coolness toward me. I never knew specifically what I had done to warrant his rejection, and he never told me.

Some people choose to sulk instead of resolve; not good, not good at all. Curiously, a few years later, he happened to build a house just around the corner from where I lived in Charleswood (another of those strange coincidences in life). I decided to pay him a friendly visit. The personal pout had entrenched itself into his countenance, and though he gave me a tour of his home, I really was not welcome; it was a strange mixture.

#### Particle - **Playing in Bars Illegally**

Deciding to pay for my own education because my parents indicated they did not have much money, I began to play rhythm for Barry, a country and western singer, in beer parlors all over Winnipeg, frequently in the north end. This was at the same time Randy Bachman and The Guess Who were making it big in the same city (as well as the country and the world). While they played at large concerts and recording studios, we played in dumps and dives that were soon to be demolished.

Because I was 19 and the legal drinking age was 21, I would borrow someone's driver's license for I.D. (they didn't have photos then.) One night the bouncer asked me some quick questions and tripped me up. My alleged birth certificate age didn't match my oral date of birth. While the band kept its commitment with one man short, I spent the night in the hotel restaurant, waiting for them to finish.

Most of the time, however, I had no problem persuading the keepers I was of age. I often came home late, drunk and tired. I barely made the grades, but I paid my way.

#### Particle - **Family Business and Ties**

On Saturdays, I worked as a grocery boy for my Uncle Donald Hafichuk at National Foodland, his small grocery store on North Main. I would catch the bus and work there all day. It was in the poor ethnic part of Winnipeg where many Ukrainians shopped.

Occasionally, I would see one of the cashiers and Uncle Donald dashing out the door after a shoplifter (usually an older person). They would catch them, seize the goods concealed under their coats, and send them on their way without reporting them to police. They were simply forbidden to return, under threat of being charged the next time. Uncle Donald explained that there was too much trouble involved in trying to press charges.

I was there for a few months and finally went on to other activities. I don't recall that Uncle Don ever gave me, a nephew, student, and working bachelor, any free, or even discounted, groceries. He kept even the damaged goods to return to suppliers.

And he was in partnership with his father-in-law, Mr. Woroway, who operated a wholesale grocery business (Sel-Rite, I believe). Couldn't he have done something? He was most often apparently lighthearted, friendly, teasing, and joking with the staff and me, but I guess he just wasn't all that generous. I didn't even get invited to their home in Transcona.

Families are often not families, no matter how close they think to be (I thought ours was close-knit).

#### Particle - **My First Home in Winnipeg**

I recall the first place where I boarded and roomed, the seventh home of my life. I rented the suite in Winnipeg from an elderly English couple, the Palmers. They lived on Elgin Avenue near King Edward Street, near MIT. A small bedroom and meals were provided for a reasonable sum. The meals were good for about two weeks, then took a marked decline in quality.

Within two months, I was required to share my room with another guy, Walter Lewis, a farm fellow from Saskatchewan, who was taking Medical Lab. The rent fee was not diminished, and he did not pay any less than I.

One day I was absent for supper, and Walter told me the landlady flew into a rage, throwing pots full of food against the walls. We decided to move soon after to a light housekeeping suite on McDermott Avenue, trading the traveling distance advantage for freedom to cook and eat at our convenience.

#### Particle - **Frightening Old Folk**

One Saturday we had a rock jam session with a few students and, not meaning any harm, we dreadfully frightened the elderly landlord and landlady, the Millers, I believe. They came upstairs crying, trembling and immediately served us notice of eviction. We disbanded our party, apologized - sorry we had frightened them - and solemnly, sincerely promised we would never do anything like that again. They would not change their minds, however, and we had to leave.

#### Particle - **Drinking Buddies**

During Business Administration '65-67, and for a few years while working for the Bay, I fell in with some friends who, like me, loved to drink and party. We visited many a bar throughout Winnipeg, going to see many entertainers. I believe I was an alcoholic and after a few years began to black out. I could not remember driving home from bars.

I reveled with my friends - Gerry McClintock, Dave Miller, Dave Adams, and a few others. I look back and wish I had treated them better; I was so very selfish and chintzy with everyone.

I also know that without a radical change of life, we are all selfish and corrupt in various ways. A regretful moral hindsight only comes after a supernatural spiritual change for the better, nothing less than a rebirth.

#### Particle - **The Ukrainian Clown**

I was one to tell Ukrainian jokes, using the Slavic accent in my English. Many would break up laughing. We put some mock interviews on closed circuit TV in the college. A fellow named Erickson posed as my interviewer. I also imitated people, like Mr. Trenholm, our accounting instructor, with his shirt out of his pants and his gut hanging out; it was fairly easy because I was developing a larger waistline from all the beer.

I never wanted to make a career out of vaudeville, but I casually dabbled, and some enjoyed it. I relished being an entertainer and often played guitar and sang for many at MIT and parties.



## **Particle - Tim Fedak**

Tim, a fellow student in Business Administration, was a funny fellow. He imitated our economics professor and Mick Jagger's microphone antics, to their music, and did a rather good job of it. He reveled in the humorous and saw something funny in many things.

Tim got himself circumcised and spoke to several people about it, relating how painful it was. I didn't know what to make of it, or why he would do it. It wasn't for religious reasons that I was aware. Why did he tell people about this? I don't know, but it seemed to be a big event in his life.

I saw Tim years later in Winnipeg. He was employed with a grocery chain - Dominion or Loblaw's. I tried to talk to him about God, but he showed no interest.

## **Particle - Archie Shoots Up the Town**

During this time at MIT, I received a call in Winnipeg from my mother, who was very upset with me. Archie and a friend of his had gone to the Exhibition Grounds and elsewhere in Dauphin with a pellet gun and shot up a bunch of windows in public buildings.

"Why didn't you tell me this was going to happen?" she asked. "Why did you put him up to it? Why didn't you stop him? What kind of brother are you?!"

I was amazed. I had nothing to do with it or Archie, being busy in school and work 200 miles away. I knew nothing of it, yet my mother blamed me for Archie's stunts and crimes. For some reason, it seemed that my mother had it in for me from early childhood. I protested, and I think she realized she was wrong for blaming me, but she never apologized; however, I look back and think that I could have been more understanding with her in her fears and humiliation.

## **Particle - Chickens Home to Roost**

Once while visiting Ron and Barb Hrehirchuk (my sister and her husband), I was playing with their boy, Ron Junior, in the living room, with several other guests present. Ronnie was about three or four years old. I picked him up by the ankles and swung him around. He was enjoying it, but his pants began to pull upward, exposing his underwear (and perhaps partially more).

We had all been drinking, so I don't know what my reflexes were like or how long it took to notice something amiss, but my sister suddenly screamed at me in front of everyone, cursing me and demanding that I let Ronnie down. I was startled. Wow, right out of nowhere!

I am sure I was at fault for what I did, but I had no intention of embarrassing or hurting Ron. I certainly didn't think Barbara's harsh public reaction was called for.

Years later, I came to what I believed a feasible conclusion as to why she reacted that way. Chickens had come home to roost.

## **Particle - My Father's Marital Advice**

Being Head Housekeeper at the Dauphin General Hospital, my father had his regular schedule to maintain as well as tending to unexpected circumstances, like cleaning the morgue and other

situations where occasional messes were made. Sometimes the nurses in training residences had parties, and his men would have to clean up after them.

One day he took me to their residence and showed me a suite. It was a mess that would take several extra hours of labor. "Victor," he said, "that's what women are like. Whatever you do, don't ever get married."

Men have parties and make messes, too. Men generally get more physically and personally violent and brutal. I know that my father had his share of problems with my mother, and that may have prompted his remarks. Regardless, those words impacted me. I thought, "Most people marry; if they didn't, there would be no families. Why would he tell his son not to marry?" I was surprised he expressed himself to me that way. We didn't talk about it, and he never said anything of the like again. I now suspect he had conflict with Mom, but I didn't have a clue then.

#### Particle - **Gerry McClintock**

One of the best friends I ever had in the unbelieving world was Gerry McClintock. He was also in Business Administration and planned to work with Continental Grain, with whom he later became president. Gerry was an affable man - generous, good-humored, popular, and considerate. The Lord gave me a good friend in him. I also appreciated his parents, his brother, Ken, and his sister, Kathy.

#### Particle - **Livia Phillips**

In my first year in Winnipeg, I met Livia Phillips at the Winnipeg Children's Hospital nurse's residence on a double date. She was a student nurse, the daughter of a Ukrainian farmer of Vita, Manitoba. We ended up spending a good portion of our lives together, until one day she severely, publicly scolded me for making a wrong turn in the country to a riverside wiener roast.

I suppose she was particularly upset because there was a line of cars depending on us to lead the way, a way with which I was not too familiar. It was not long before we found the right way, but I resolved that night that we were done. I could not accept the possibility of living with a woman who would, suddenly and without warning, blow up at me, especially publicly.

Here was another person who needed help, but all I could think about was myself, incapable of helping anyone. It was simply not in me to understand or care.

#### Particle - **Embarrassment with Strings Attached**

After hearing this one, nobody will ever want to kiss me again, but then, I'm married, so that's good! One evening, Livia and I were double-dating with Rick Harrison and Sandy, whom he later married. We had all been drinking, and as we were in the foyer kissing goodnight, I turned to leave through the two sets of glass double doors. There was a string of saliva stretching from Livia's mouth to my mouth.

Perhaps I have greatly exaggerated the situation in my mind over the years, but it seemed that only the doors put an end to the endless string that would have followed me to the parking lot. I do not recall too many events more embarrassing than that one. It wasn't Livia's; it was mine. I have SSS - super strength saliva - shades of Spider Man?

Livia, if you ever read this, I wish you well, and for what it is worth, I apologize for all my selfishness. You used to laugh a lot with me; you might find this funny.

#### Particle - **A Broken Home on Home Street**

My next home in Winnipeg with Walter Lewis was a much nicer place - 122 Home Street; light housekeeping again, rented from Lydia Kisel, a separated woman with two or three young sons. One day her husband, Mike, dropped by and broke down crying, talking to me about their separation. I was surprised that he should confide in me, a young stranger. He was broken, and she was bitter and cruelly cynical, running around with men. I recall their boys being very sad, Donnie their eldest, being one. Here was yet another example in my experience of a woman leaving a man.

Shortly thereafter she had breast cancer and a double mastectomy. Had she known before she turned on her husband, or did it happen after, or even perhaps because, she turned on him? One day we will know these things.

#### Particle - **A Time Appointed To Heal**

I now wish I could have helped so many troubled and hurting people that came my way. Yet it seems there are as many hurting people today, and I feel just as helpless. Unless they are prepared to take responsibility for themselves, take constructive criticism, and listen to the truth, can they be helped?

I also know that unless God opens the door, we can do nothing. Many don't think they need help or are reluctant to admit they need it, unless circumstances overwhelm them. As the writer of Ecclesiastes declares, there is a time for everything, suffering and healing, laughing and crying, winning and losing.

#### Particle - **Trick or Treat**

I went to a drinking party one day in an apartment of some friends from Business Administration. I was sure I had just purchased a large pack of Rothman's, with only two or three cigarettes used. Going for another cigarette, my pack was gone from the end table. It was not usual for others to steal that sort of thing among friends. It was mysterious to me, and I even wondered if I was not mistaken, being drunk.

About a month later, one of those friends invited me into his bedroom. I thought, "Uh oh, is he homosexual, propositioning me?" I went, and with a strange look in his eye and sound in his voice, he said, "Come here - I want to show you something," motioning me to his dresser. I cautiously approached; he opened a drawer and gazed at the contents with a dreamy, almost crazed, expression.

"Look at this!" he quietly exclaimed with passion, as though secretly showing me Tutankhamen's buried treasure, or as Gollum viewed "the ring." I saw a drawer full of cigarette packages, neatly enclosed in plastic held with one or two rubber bands. And there was a pack of Rothman's on top.

I didn't think Gary meant any harm and immediately understood he was a kleptomaniac with a fixation on cigarettes. I did not ask for the cigarettes or talk to him about his problem.

## Particle - **The Sound of Music**

At Home Street, I began to take voice lessons. I was enthralled by *The Sound of Music*, with Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer. I was moved by the romance, the music, and the virtues of the characters, and I wanted to sing. But I did not have confidence in myself or my teacher, there was nowhere to practice privately, and there was nobody to push, encourage, or direct me.

So I'm not a singer...but I believe I could have been. Obviously, the true driving ambition that needs to be there was not there. But one day, music and singing would come.

## Particle - **Billy Graham Comes to Town**

Walter Lewis and I got along, although he had his friends and I had mine for the most part. When he was finished Medical Lab training, I had to find elsewhere to live. I then joined Fred Slater, a fellow Business Administration student from Toronto, and we found another place, not nice, but cheap, on Fawcett Avenue.

We found out that Billy Graham was coming to preach at the Winnipeg stadium... **for free!** Because he was a celebrity, we went to see him. He had a powerful delivery and charisma, and I was attracted to him. When he gave the invitation to come forward, I wanted to go forward and told Fred. He decided to go with me.

When we got to the stage, I was very disappointed to get an older, rather dull-dressed, man to pray "the sinner's prayer" with me. But I followed his instructions and went through the motions. This was now my second exposure to what was called "the Gospel" and evangelical Christianity.

Afterwards we put away the alcohol, tried hard not to smoke, and tore down the Playboy centerfolds from our walls. We tried drinking tomato juice at the bars with the boys while they drank beer, and they couldn't help but laugh at us. We lasted about three days and packed it all in. On my part, it was not without at least a tiny bit of guilt, along with the embarrassment of not being able to follow through.

## Particle - **Pepper Parts Pals**

As was my custom and nature, I did another very foolish thing. Fred was quite sensitive, and I was a brute. I had the habit of putting lots of pepper on my food, while he did not like any. One day, I decided to give him some anyway. He burst out in surprisingly great anger and gave me notice that he was leaving. He left and never did forgive me. I couldn't understand what the big deal was.

## Particle - **Bunking with Mr. Manitoba Runner-Up**

So I moved in with Rick Steinke to a basement suite at his relatives' place on Bannatyne Avenue. Rick was a quiet Commerce grad, also hired by the Bay as a management trainee. He excelled to "Mr. Manitoba" or runner-up in bodybuilding, played acoustic - mostly Gordon Lightfoot - and enjoyed his liquor. He hung out with some guys who aspired to be professional hockey players. A bit more on him later... regretfully.

## Particle - **A Deal for the Future**

Around this time, Lois Szmon, my mother's sister who was only a year older than I, was living and working in Edmonton, and we all came home for Christmas. The Szmon family got together at Lois'

Aunt Cary Schaeffer's in Gilbert Plains. On this visit, a peculiar and portentous thing happened, more than met the eye: Lois made a deal with me that if I married first, I would owe her a dollar, and vice versa.

It was the only such future transaction I would ever make with anyone that I can remember. The strange thing is that there would be an infinitely greater connection between us than we ever dreamed could exist, of greater import than has occurred with many.

#### Particle - **Jilted**

My friends and I did a fair bit of blind dating in Winnipeg. I met a young and pretty brunette at a party, Jan Delorme, whom I now realize was rather mischievous, though I did not discern it then. As I drove her home, we agreed on a date for the following weekend.

I was looking forward to that night, but when my friend, his date, and I came to pick her up in St. Vital, she was not there. I was embarrassed and crestfallen; the only thing I could think of doing was to proceed with the planned evening and get drunk. In days to follow, wondering if there was an innocent error or plausible excuse, I tried calling her, but she did not return my calls. That was not the only rejection I had known in my life, but it had an impact on me. There would be more and greater ones.

#### Particle - **Self-Destruction by Ignorance**

While a fair bit of my story is about self-destruction in many ways, I would like to point out a few of the more common ways people hurt themselves, ways that many do not even think about. I am sorry I used Head and Shoulders shampoo; I suspect I would have more hair today (not to mention health), if not for that caustic scalper. I am sorry I used Secret antiperspirant deodorant, Brut and any other cosmetic shave lotions, along with other toiletries, cleaners, and cold remedies, like Dimetapp and Contac C.

We live in a world of chemicals - toiletries, household cleansers, and pharmaceuticals - that are killing us. Companies marketing them are there for the money, not for our health. I did not know it then; I do now.

I used to perspire a lot, so much so that my suit armpits showed large white rings. Wearing absorption pads did not always help. Little did I know that polyester suits, shirts, and T-shirts would do this to someone.

Though I wore only leather shoes, I wore nylon and polyester hosiery and my feet perspired until my shoes turned white on the sides, the sweat penetrating and eventually cracking the leather.

I bought Harts and Florsheims, good shoes in those days, to comfort my feet on the cement floors at the Bay, to no avail. I was overweight, I drank, and I smoked. I ate bachelor fare, which was more about taste than health and nutrition. I was an ignorant, self-destructive slob. If I had any understanding, I wouldn't have known what to do with it.

#### Particle - **Polyester a Poor Pal**

Only in recent years have I realized that polyester and other synthetic materials are not the materials to wear if you want comfort and don't wish to sweat and stink. I try a polyester T-shirt and I stink; I try a cotton one and I do much better. In those days, everything I wore was polyester

- suits, socks, shirts, and T-shirts. I didn't have to iron anything, it lasted "forever" and looked good, but I sweated and stunk. So the best thing for people to do was to admire the iron-free man from a distance.

#### Particle - **Love as Thin Ice**

While at MIT and shortly after, I did something that I regret to this day. A pretty woman, Pat Dennis, perhaps infatuated with my comedy and guitar playing, began approaching me. I was uncomfortable at first, knowing she was engaged. I also knew the man to whom she was engaged - Bob Southam, one of my classmates in Business Administration, whom I appreciated. He was quite simply a nice guy. He was even handsome and well off, an uncommon combination. Pat prevailed with me, however, persuading me that she was not in love with Bob, and that I need not worry about it. She intended to break off with him, which she did.

Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Dennis, though friendly and respectful, were not receptive of me as her suitor, hoping that Bob would be her husband. Pat insisted on me, and Bob left. Pat and I dated for about a year, and I loved her, but I was not comfortable that she ought to be my wife. She was also not quite prepared to marry me, either.

One day I was very frank with her about my feelings and thoughts concerning her, which indicated that I was not in deep love with her. She immediately severed all communications, without notice. I tried calling her parents' place (she lived with them); her mother, Mrs. Dennis, answered and told me she wasn't in. This happened a few times until I got the message. Brokenhearted, I went on with my life, but it was not quite the end of the story. I would be surprised to hear from her again.

#### Particle - **The Right Man Wronged**

Here is the primary regret and purpose for my account of this incident. Years later, I came to believe that Bob Southam had been the man appointed of God for Pat. Her parents appreciated him, and Bob and Pat seemed made and meant for each other. I came to deeply regret that I had not recognized these things, honored them, and counseled Pat in that direction. Bob had been very hurt by her rejection, and he was noble enough to honestly and openly admit it. God grant that Bob was comforted, and that Pat finally found her way.

#### Particle - **Recurring Nightmare of Approaching Exams**

Throughout the terms, I hardly did my homework and certainly did not read my textbooks, so when exams approached, I had to cram, taking bennies, and drinking a lot of coffee to stay awake most, if not all, of the night for many days in nearly a two-week stretch. I once fell asleep on the exam paper in the finals, and Mr. Trenholm gently awakened me.

For decades after that, I had nightmares of exams approaching, not having opened my books, three weeks away, two weeks, one week, three days, tomorrow... and still somehow I hadn't cracked a book. I was also in fear of having wasted my time and money and still falling short of what was needed to complete my education.

But again, all those nasty dreams would be dealt with in a most marvelous manner.

## **Particle - Garden Raiding**

A strange thing occurred when I was home in Dauphin for a few days from Winnipeg. My cousin Christine Hafichuk, her fiancé - Alan Tough, one or two others, and I had something to drink. I got it into our heads to go garden raiding, something that others had often mentioned as a prank. Why? I have no idea. It was as though a bout of insanity took hold of us, and we raided fresh produce from strangers' gardens. It wasn't even Halloween, when pranks were the custom.

Incredibly, I showed off the vegetables in my trunk the next day to my parents and Aunt Mary and told them to help themselves. My father was stunned and greatly chagrined. "I never thought I raised my kids to do anything like this!" he murmured plaintively. My aunt said nothing.

I think my father tried to scare me, saying the police were out looking for the raiders. Maybe they were, but how would he know? I look back at that incident with great shame, wondering what got into me. Devils? Plain foolishness? What? It wasn't drunkenness; every now and then, insanity would come and take a bite as it pleased.

## **Particle - California**

The day came when, in spite of myself, I received the Diploma of Applied Arts in Business Administration. As graduates from MIT, Gerry McClintock, Dave Miller, Don Pierson, and I united to take a two-week car trip to California in Gerry's black '56 Chevy or Olds. We were out for a good time, staying in cheap motels, drinking all the way there and back.

In San Francisco, a black man who "saw us coming" approached us on the street. He offered us black sex, which we paid for but did not get, he tricking us and disappearing with the money. I was also openly and unabashedly propositioned by a big, strong black homosexual on the street and talked my way out of getting possibly accosted. The guys and I went to strip shows and generally searched for cheap pleasures. We did not pay much attention to the tourist attractions, though we saw places like the Golden Gate Bridge, if we happened to be passing by.

In San Diego, we gazed at the naval base as we continued on to Mexico. In Tijuana, I purchased hundreds of dollars worth of black velvet paintings, had them shipped back to Winnipeg, and sold them or gave them away as gifts. One man running a market booth wanted to sell me an acoustic guitar for \$80. I dickered with him for an hour or more down to \$30, and then someone warned me that their guitars warp after a short time, so I decided not to buy it. The vendor was enraged.

We took the legendary "Tijuana Taxi Ride" where they drive you all over the city to take you where you want to go, from a spot that might have been but a decent walk to the destination. Of course, they charge you for it. We were looking for live sex shows, bestiality and all, but did not see them. We did see sex movies in dumpy motels full of prostitutes who encouraged us to buy their services. We didn't do so, not out of virtue, but because we were afraid of STDs and being robbed. We had watched dancing girls literally scratching themselves from "crabs" (an STD) and decided to keep our health.

In Hollywood, Los Angeles, we stayed with cousin Bob Prestayko - Fred and Mary's only son - and his common-law wife, Zeta, an alcoholic. Both were secretly taking drugs, yet we somehow knew it. Bob had been in California for several years and tried to accomplish his goal of being a singing star. He changed his surname to Eastman, thinking that since the entertainment business was largely Jewish, he might get the break he needed - as if they wouldn't know.

Reportedly, he never made it because of stage fright, but he did indeed have a very good crooning voice, like that of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Perry Como, Andy Williams, Tony Bennett, Pat Boone, Al Martino, Johnny Mathis, Bing Crosby, and such others... even Michael Bubl , who wasn't born yet!

Speaking of Bing Crosby, Bob took us to a bar Gene Autry owned. Bob spotted two of Bing's sons walking in, Dennis and Phil, I believe. We could have introduced ourselves or not bothered, but Bob was going to show us how "in" he was with those in Hollywood and stardom, so he immediately approached them and acted as though they were longtime buddies, introducing them to us. (Bob was always self-important.)

Dennis was not about to take it lightly. He politely shook our hands, but then turned to Bob and publicly rebuked him for his presumption and pretence. "I don't know you! I've never met you before in my life!"

Bob was embarrassed but unrepentant. It was more important for him to appear to be somebody than to be honest and real. He shrugged it off and continued as though nothing had happened. There was truly something psychologically amiss with Bob. I was somewhat embarrassed that he, my cousin, should act that way, and the boys had a good laugh about it for the next several days. I laughed with them in my beer. Upon reflection, I began to strongly suspect Bob was a sociopath, a man with his own reality or at least severed from the general reality.

#### **Particle - Not a Fighter at Heart**

Gerry and Don ended up having a fight. Alarmed at the conflict, I shouted for them to stop (Dave and I both did) and threatened that if they didn't smarten up, I would leave them all right there. (I wasn't really about to do that, but they stopped. They didn't really want to fight, anyway.)

#### **Particle - Some Sun Done**

We then headed to the beach for some midsummer California sun and tan, and we got some. The smog obscured the sun, so we thought it was not a problem to be out there. We started with no tan and were on the beach for at least six hours with only our trunks and no lotion. We were pink in an hour, red in two, rust in six, peeling within a few days, and much whiter and lighter thereafter.

Gerry could barely walk for the next few days, almost as though he were hamstrung, his legs at about a 140 degree angle at the knees, moving around like a crab, only not nearly as fast. But we all lived to continue to be fools for a while longer.

#### **Particle - Enter the Fornicator**

When first joining the Bay retail store at Portage and Memorial as an executive trainee, I rented at the Martello Apartments on Broadway. During that time I became involved intimately with several girls. I recall the day I lost my virginity. I felt badly and even cried. I expected that there would be a sense of victory or pride but, instead, I had a sense of shame. (You wouldn't know it, hearing me talk to the guys.)

It is amazing, however, how the conscience hardens so swiftly. I did not hesitate with the next girl, and I felt half the guilt. After the third or fourth, I was looking forward to more. That's how it



works. It goes from uncomfortable to easy and pleasurable. With repetition, vice becomes desirable, and one can grow proud of a shameful thing.

What is the answer? Don't start; keep yourself chaste; save yourself for your destined lifelong partner, should you receive one. Consequences wait in the wings for those who don't wait, I assure you.

Such as...

### **Particle - A Child Somewhere?**

I met Candy Shea at the bottom of the stairs in my Housewares department at the Bay. She was a pretty woman in her late teens, slightly plump, a bit shy, but friendly. Candy had some class, and she dressed and presented herself well. I soon struck up a conversation with this particular shopper and began to try for a date. Though I was devoid of skills to woo, impress, or flatter her, I finally succeeded in getting what seemed a reluctant consent. She was either playing hard to get or was naturally skeptical of dating a perfect stranger. But at the end of the day, it seems she decided a Bay junior executive may not be that great a risk.

I was surprised when I arrived at her home days later to find that she remained committed to our agreement. I thought she might stand me up. We dated several times, and I enjoyed her in many ways, one of them not as I ought. If I had known she was the daughter of the Minister of the Department of Transportation in Manitoba, I might not have been so bold with her.

One day, she posed a question to me: "What would you say if I told you I was going to have a baby? How would you feel about it?" I thought, "Uh oh, why is she asking me this? I think I'll pretend there is nothing to it, like nothing really happened, and she's just asking." My reply was, "I wouldn't want that to happen."

I assumed that girls took the pill, or they wouldn't indulge in sex. I also assumed that the pill was foolproof and that their diligence in taking it was as well. How naïve! I didn't ask what they did, and frankly, I didn't really care. I never wore a condom. Somehow, I didn't believe that it should ever happen to me that I should have a child out of wedlock. Just like young guys go to war thinking they are invincible. I guess it's a denial of undesirable reality, a trait inherent in all.

I didn't realize I was playing with lives - her life, her parents' lives, the potential child's life, and the lives of all those involved! Fornicators and adulterers are very foolish, shortsighted, and selfish people, living for short-term, small-time pleasure with potential long-term, big-time implications and consequences.

Candy began to cry and answered, "Then, if I did have a baby, seeing you wouldn't want it, I would never tell you if I had it, not ever. You would never know your child." Unless I am missing something, she was pregnant and tested the waters to see what my reaction would be, hoping I would be receptive. Whether I was simply stupid or in denial or both (I expect both), I didn't get it. I didn't ask her plainly, and I didn't want to know. I chose to ignore the whole thing, so much so that I didn't call her anymore.

Close to a year later, I saw her at the Bay again - with a baby carriage. I was still hiding my head in the sand, not willing to believe my eyes. I said, "Hi," and barely looked at the child. She looked like she was holding true to her word and said nothing, though her expression was telling me something I wasn't able to perceive in my absurd obtuseness.

Do I have a son or daughter out there that is over forty now? How many are the children out there who don't know who their biological father or mother is, and what is happening to them? How do they feel? How would I feel if we met?

If I were to meet my son or daughter (though they are not my child because I don't deserve to have them), would they love me as a father? No, I don't see how. A parent and child relationship is much more than biological; it is social, spiritual, a matter not only of the body, but of the mind and heart.

Having said that, I hope that the son or daughter I might have had would know that I want to do whatever is right and good for him or her. I would want to love them as my own, though I know that mere flesh and blood isn't what it is all about. It occurs to me I could be a grandfather or even a great grandfather now, for all I know, but not in the living and true sense.

I marvel at Candy's resolve in trying times. The Lord grant you mercy and all that you need, Candy, and your son or daughter, mine or not.

#### **Particle - The Guess Who**

A little tidbit: Randy Bachman and the rest of The Guess Who occasionally came through our Basement Housewares department for chocolate malts at the Bay Malt Shop in the late sixties. This was when they were already famous and popular.

#### **Particle - Hooked, Hat and All**

On a visit home from Winnipeg, my father and I went fishing at the Waterhen, north of Dauphin, where he had a trailer and often spent his leisure time fishing. I was seated in the boat behind my father. As we were casting for pickerel and perch, my father's hook flew within inches of my head, more than once or twice. I warned him and even protested, but he paid no attention. Suddenly, there it was, a hook lodged firmly in my scalp, through my hat. Thankfully, it was not in my eye.

While there was very little pain or blood, my father panicked and sped off with me down a gravel road to the nearest clinic in Ste. Rose du Lac.

Walking into the doctor's office, he asked me how he could help me. "I can't get my hat off," I replied. I pointed to the fish hook; he smiled, gave me a local anesthetic, cut the hook, pushed the remainder on through my scalp (you can't pull a hook out against the barb), gave me some painkillers (which I didn't use), and we were off.

They say sons should listen to their fathers. Just as the direction of a hook needs to be reversed at times, so fathers need to listen to their sons.

#### **Particle - Shaky Shelter for a Shattered Woman**

One day, a woman came frantically knocking on my Martello apartment door, begging me to let her in. I knew her - she was the wife of the caretaker for the block, Bert Paling. She was urgently seeking shelter. I let her in and locked the door behind her. She warned me that Bert could be entirely irrational and violent. She told me he had once or twice deliberately broken her fingers and taken a knife to her luxurious fur coat he bought her as a gift.

What does one do in such a situation? I knew that getting in the middle of a squabble could be unwise. I knew that in trying to help her, Bert's jealousy and rage might know no bounds, to the point of murder. And I didn't know if he was jealous for a good reason or not.

He came banging on the door, shouting a demand for her to come out. He was about to break down the door. She didn't want to call the police. I advised her that she needed to get away from him. While I don't recall what happened, I believe he realized that with others involved, he had better change his ways, at least temporarily. She consented to leave, he was friendly later, though sheepish, and I heard of no more trouble.

#### Particle - **Bert's Gift to the Kives Brothers**

Bert had been a carnie (one who travels and works with a carnival). He once held in his hands an invention, the Veg-O-Matic food slicer, which was a winner at carnivals. I don't know why, but he gave it to the Kives Brothers, Phil and Ted, one of whom, he said, had also been a carnie. They promoted it on television nationwide under the name K-Tel, and thus began creating their fortune. They were known for their fast-talking record promotions.

They bought the Westminster Hotel, among several other investments, and Bert took me down to meet them. They thanked him, as they had done at other times, saying they were indebted to him for their success, and asked him again if they could do something for him. He refused any reward.

Bert later explained to me that a code of conduct among carnies was that they did not accept favors or payments if there was no deal made for something they did for someone (something like that; may a carnie correct me if I am wrong).

Perhaps the Kives brothers felt safe in asking, or is that too cynical of me? I understand they later suffered huge losses due to inexperience and error.

#### Particle - **Wealth Does Not Breed Generosity**

Phil's riches did not make him generous. He gave Bert nothing, and he would not even pay for the single drink I had with them, though they owned the place. I always marvel at the fact that more coin seldom loosens the purse string, unless the coin is entering the purse. Indeed, the weight of the moneybag seems to tighten the string.

#### Particle - **Dry Grass Is Greener**

Gerry McClintock, Don McLeod (his cousin), Dave Miller, Dave Adams, and a supplier of marijuana gathered with me in my apartment to smoke; it was my first time. Girls came to the door, smelled the smoke, and wondered what we were doing. I sent them away with some phony explanation, afraid we would get reported.

Don McLeod was divorced and of a rather tough countenance. He was often rather sarcastic with, and ignored, me. This night while high, however, he was absolutely sincere, if not genuinely interested. As we smoked, he asked me questions about how the pot made me feel. I was pleasantly surprised. It almost made me wonder if it would not be a much happier and more peaceful world if everyone did weed. I was at great peace. Nobody seemed to want to fight or argue or be sarcastic. I found everyone unpretentious and considerate. It was amazing.

It seems many have found grass greener on the dry side.

I was surprised how it affected my sense of time. I looked at my watch and it was 8:30. What seemed like an hour later, I looked again, and it was 8:32! What was wrong with my watch? I asked others what time it was and, sure enough, my watch was fine. Maybe I read it wrong the first time. I checked it an “hour” later to find it had progressed only a few minutes more.

We went to the bar and loved everybody there. No wonder pot, flowers, love, and cynicism of the establishment that demands a “respectable” lifestyle go together. I enjoyed the experience, but I knew that I didn’t want to make myself at home there. I sensed it would lead me deeper, into places I didn’t wish to go; places from which, perhaps, there might be no return? I might have done pot one other time, and that was it. I have never used any other drugs. Alcohol was my pleasure, mostly beer.

#### **Particle - “Red” (Past) Versus “Read” (Passé)**

This is an “aside” particle, likely the only one you will find here. Using the word “red” instead of “read” in the past tense was deliberate. At some point, logic dictated to me that if one has “lead” and “led,” or “feed” and “fed,” or “meet” and “met,” then we ought to have “read” and “red.” After all, does one say, “Yesterday, I meet the new neighbors,” or, “Yesterday, she feed the kids,” or, “Last year, they lead the parade”? So, yesterday, I “red” a book.

Of course, I am being somewhat silly because the English language is full of incongruity and contradiction. Sew, Latin wuzz knot maid inn a dey, and English is an evolving peace of art.

#### **Particle - Bar Hopping and Beer Sopping**

We visited the pubs and bars many nights (we didn’t wait for weekends), and we pursued the entertainment around town - Dianne Heatherington, Wayne Walker, Pat Riordon, and many others.

Beer was a big part of our lives, a substance most people hate at first taste, like smoking or chewing tobacco. Why do they persist until they get to enjoy that which once contorted their faces?

Brand recognition played a big role. My preference was Labatt’s Blue. In the US, Dave’s preference was Schlitz, a joke with us. Why? Was it better? If one served me in a blind test, I wouldn’t know the difference, especially after having one or two. In the pubs, we drank draught beer from the tap. Who knew what went into those dispensers? More to the point, who cared?

#### **Particle - Smoking Addiction**

I now smoked a large pack of cigarettes a day. Many times I tried to quit and failed. I tried cutting down on numbers gradually; I tried smoking at only certain times; I tried smoking the cigarettes halfway and snuffing them; I tried cigars to wean myself from cigarettes; I tried smoking a pipe for a while. None of these partial measures seemed to help. I finally succeeded in breaking away by quitting cold turkey.

It was not easy by any means. I had to replace the habit with something. I tried chewing gum or candy, but I had a weight problem and didn’t want to do that continuously. I resorted to toothpicks, and I realized they helped because I had something in my hand; addiction associates with many things, even the hand that serves the body’s cravings. While toothpicks were rather crude for me, seeing I was managing staff and dealing with the public, they did help me quit.

Within days of quitting, I felt better. I didn't wake up with a yucky throat and cough in the morning, my head was clearer, I had more energy, I didn't stink as much, and others were not annoyed with the secondhand smoke.

I quit, but not without some backlash. I could now taste my food and enjoy it that much more - which was a problem because I liked food and began to put on the pounds. I also had nightmares of having started smoking again. I felt awful, thinking, "I was on my way to recovery - clean for a week, a month, a year! Why was I so stupid as to start again?" Then I would wake up, realizing it was only a dream and feeling so relieved that I had not caved to the addiction.

This went on for about three years. In those days, smokers often offered one a cigarette when they were lighting up. I stalwartly refused. "No thanks, I quit," I responded.

"Good for you," they would say, sometimes adding, "I should, too, but I can't seem to kick the habit." Seldom did they ask how I did it, and seldom would they insist that I join them, unlike with alcohol. (Curiously, I don't recall saying, "No thanks, I **don't smoke**"!)

One day, sad to say, I did accept a cigarette from someone. I deliberately did not inhale, not on that one or the next, but soon I was taking it in, wondering if I might not get sick as I did the first time ever. I didn't, but I was hooked again.

Soon, I was smoking OP's (other people's). I still resisted going back to my bondage (as though I wasn't there already), so at first I only smoked what was offered, but it wasn't long before I was bumming a smoke. I resisted buying my own, thinking I still had a chance to win the battle, until people began to get annoyed with me, and it became embarrassing to ask. I recall the time I took change from my pocket, walked over to a cigarette dispenser, slotted the coins, pulled up a pack, broke the seal, borrowed a light, and lit up. I was back at it.

Did I feel badly at that moment? Not really. I think it was more like a war of attrition I had been conditioned to lose for some time.

I had enjoyed about three years of victory, waking from many nightmares with relief that my victory was intact. Then, as a dog, I went back to my vomit. Red-faced, they saw I was back at it (though in the sixties it was not as repugnant to smoke as it is today). It was now a nightmare from which I could not awaken. I recalled kissing girls that smoked while I was abstaining. It was awful. Now those kissing me that didn't smoke would get the same taste. "Kissing a smoker is like licking a dirty ashtray," the saying goes, not overly far from the truth - depending on how one kisses!

### Particle - Smoking an Only Pleasure

In one of these years, I recall talking with my mother because I was concerned about Dad smoking and wanted him to quit. Her reply: "Don't take smoking away from Dad. It's the only pleasure he has."

"What?" I thought, with the same kind of shock I had when Uncle Fred Hafichuk spoke of the little that could be expected from life, only he was talking about a lot more than what my mother was now declaring. "Is she telling me that life wouldn't be worth living for him without smoking? How miserable an existence! Surely, she can't mean it."

What about her? Was she no pleasure to him? What about children, friends, religion, food - anything? Was she his reason for being reduced to seeking pleasure in some miserable smoke? I really could not believe my ears. I also thought that if it was true that all he had left in the whole wide world was smoking, surely it must have some kind of value after all, above so many things.

#### **Particle - Drunkenness and Foolishness**

Gerry McClintock, Dave Miller, Dave Adams, Merv Onyshko, one or two other fellows, and I tried to take our annual fishing derby in some remote place on May long weekend. We got drunk and stayed that way for the whole time. We did very foolish things that make me shake my head in shame and wonder that we did not kill ourselves.

#### **Particle - Bumble Beer**

One day, we got to the town near the lake (near Kenora, Ontario), bought the beer, brought it into the car, opened the case, and the police were right there to confiscate the beer and fine us, having been watching for that very kind of long weekend activity. Did that stop us? Of course not; we didn't drive that far for nothing!

I recall driving drunk through winding rocky passes on wet pavement in the Lake of the Woods area near the Manitoba/Ontario border at about 50 miles an hour, in the rain, rushing to get to our cabins in Ontario.

On another occasion, we were out on the lake with two boats, and we were drunk. Now this is a lake with ice cold water at this time of year. We were splashing each other with our oars and gently ramming each other on the lake. We were fooling around, and anything could have happened. Do I deserve to be alive?

#### **Particle - Fooling with Death**

While we were out on the lake, Gerry had to pee. He knelt at the edge of the boat and began. I don't know what possessed me, but I gave him a slight nudge on the back, not expecting it would affect him. I suppose I, being drunk, didn't know my strength, and he, being drunk, wasn't very stable. He went head first into the icy waters.

He came right back up, freshly sobered, and out - out of the water and out for bear. Your guess is as good as mine as to where he was going to find a bear in the middle of the lake. In his inebriation, I must have looked like one, because he came straight for me. He grabbed me to throw me in, while I grabbed the seat of the boat with all my might, instinctively knowing that if I remained upright and defended myself, we could all soon be goners. Fortunately, Dave Miller had a cool head and brusquely hauled Gerry off of me, hollering that we would capsize and all perish, being far from shore in frigid waters. It was so true.

We got Gerry to shore immediately, and he was much chilled, but he forgave me. Gerry did not seem to hold grudges, even if he did develop a W. C. Fields nose for days afterwards.

#### **Particle - Flirting with Death**

One evening, I picked Pat Dennis (Bob Southam's ex-fiancée) up at her parents' cabin at West Hawk Lake in my '65 Ford. On our way to the bar at Falcon Lake, I turned to kiss her, and the car left the road and entered a deep reedy, boggy ditch. We had some difficulty opening the doors, but

we got out, wet, and hitched a ride to town where I got the guys to come and help me get the car out.

We knocked on a farmer's door, asking for a chain with which we could pull out my car. The farmer brusquely dismissed us and threatened to call the police. We left, but we were offended that he would not help us in a time of need, so we went back to his shop, stole the chain, and headed out, intending to return the chain when done.

It wasn't long before the police caught us with the goods. We explained our situation. They didn't charge us, but took the chain back, informing us we would not succeed with it. They sent us on our way, advising us to get a tow truck the next day. So we went to the bar and laughed about what had happened.

The next day when we returned to get the car, we couldn't find it. Had someone stolen it? Did we have the right road? We drove farther up the road to be sure we had gone far enough, but saw nothing. Turning around and returning, we spotted the car. It was so embedded in water and reeds in the deep ditch that we could only see it through the trail it had made when Pat and I veered off the road.

A special tow truck with a good winch and long cable did the job. My car was soaked halfway up the base of the seats with swamp water, but we somehow got it running. Such a fool I was, yet we all laughed about it, even Pat. Strangely, I seemed to impress her.

#### **Particle - Taunting Death**

On another occasion, Rick Pinchen, Merv Onyshko, and I were driving south from Winnipeg to the Morris Stampede. We were already drunk. Rick pulled out into the oncoming traffic lane of a two-lane highway to pass a car. An oncoming vehicle was fast approaching. The car we were passing was not slowing down, passing was not likely, and it seemed too late to slow down and get behind the car we were trying to pass, so Rick took us on the left graveled shoulder.

Even while drunk, we could see the consternation of the driver in the oncoming vehicle, indecisively wavering, not knowing what to do or expect. As it happened, we remained on the shoulder, the oncoming driver remained steadfast in his proper lane, and we all survived.

Rick and I laughed nervously about it, but as drunk as Merv was, he was white as a bedsheet (when they were still commonly white) and quite shaken. He found another ride on the way back. Obviously, it left an impression on me, too.

#### **Particle - Dancing with Death**

One day there was a carload of us, drunk, with Ron (Ken) Ksionzyk driving down Portage Avenue at nearly 50 miles an hour, screeching to a halt at several lights in fairly active traffic, with the rear end of the car fishtailing upon breaking so as to nearly hit the cars on either side. We did so many things that make me wonder how we survived or escaped the law.

#### **Particle - Families without Unity**

Throughout much of my life, one part of me wanted to be free to do whatever I chose, not being told what to do. That is human nature. But another part of me wished to be advised, taken care of,

guided, and protected. I had friends, yet I was on my own. I had a physical family, yet I was on my own.

Why could there not be a true social, communal (of sorts), harmonious existence with others, those with whom I could be a beneficiary, as well as a benefactor? Why are so many of us on our own? The Bible has these words:

**“A father of the fatherless, and a defender of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. God sets the lonely in families. He brings out the prisoners with singing, but the rebellious dwell in a sun-scorched land” (Psalms 68:5-6 HNV).**

According to those words, we are on our own because we are stubborn, independent, proud, distrusting rebels. So how are we to live in harmony with anyone that way?

Subconsciously, I wanted to belong somewhere safe and secure. I would not have that for many years to come...but I would have it. A barrier within me would be removed, and I would meet others who experienced the same thing, paving the way to true family status and values.

#### **Particle - A Shameful Sham of a Son**

I recall only one time in the four plus years I worked at the Bay that my parents visited me there. Visiting me at work wasn't the greatest of their desires or interests, and it was inconvenient for them, living 200 miles away, to set up a time to come downtown, when they would most likely have found me busy at work.

But I report this incident with chagrin. I was such a jerk. I think I introduced Mom and Dad to some of my staff, as those happened along, and then led them to my office. I was proud I was a manager, with an office and desk, though the plain office was no more than 12 feet by 12 feet and the desk a plain one. My office was one of eight or nine in the Basement Division. I recall proudly sitting down behind my desk, to what - show off my status, as my parents stood in front of me? I remember their silent embarrassment. I was suddenly sorry for the way I was, yet didn't have it in me to correct myself or apologize. My nature was what it was in every aspect, cast in cement. I look back and hang my head in shame.

I also remember a sudden realization of how little I had to be proud of. So I was a manager. Of what? A small retail operation with a few staff members? Was I proud because I was a Bay executive? And what kind of executive? And my office - a tiny room not much greater than a cubical, one of many? What did I have to revel in? I suddenly realized I really had nothing to be proud of, whether of my status or, especially, of myself. In my pride, I was embarrassed and so were my parents, but neither of us said anything. They soon left as planned, and I went back to the work I was deceived into being proud of, and which now had an aspect of emptiness I hadn't known.

I wasn't happy at the Bay, yet I seemed powerless to do anything about it. I was so small, fearful, insecure, uninspired, and unimaginative. Hell has its occupants in chains, yet they, in their darkness, take pride in every link, which appears shiny to them and rusty to others.

#### **Particle - My First Car**

When I thought to buy my first car, I could have bought one from my Uncle Bill Hafichuk, a car salesman in Dauphin, but I didn't trust him. I didn't know where to turn, so I went out on my own.



The car I bought was a good one, a '65 Ford Galaxy, though I paid more than a skilled buyer would have paid.

Many things I did on my own, frustrated that I didn't know what I was doing, didn't know how to avail myself of help, and didn't have willing helpers to assert themselves for my sake. Consequently, I paid for it, re-inventing the wheel, time and time again.

#### **Particle - Unscrupulous Dealers for Chintzy People**

I tell this story as another example of my life of desolation. Still on my own, and feeling the pressures of debt, I decided to trade in my car for a more fuel-efficient one. I narrowed my attention to two dealers on Portage Avenue who sold imports. One sold Datsuns, the other was an Isuzu Bellet dealer.

I dickered with the two dealers. The Datsun dealer appeared frustrated that I was trying to get his car for as low a price as the Isuzu dealer was offering his. There was probably better value with the Datsun, but I didn't know it. I bought the Isuzu from Bill Gershom, who sweet-talked me into it. He took my car on trade, dickering me down considerably.

And that was the good news. Once he had me, he would service my vehicle, because it was a new product and he was the only dealer in town. That is fine while one needs no parts or service, which doesn't happen; not so fine if not.

One night, being drunk and driving home from the Fort Garry Hotel where I had been visiting and drinking with my father and a delegation from the Dauphin General Hospital, I hit the curb on one side of the street and then the other. My wheels folded inward at the bottom.

#### **Particle - Taken For an Expensive Ride**

My car was towed to the dealership and parked there during the night. The next day I called them for servicing. When I saw Bill, he asked me if I had insurance. I said I didn't. The service manager was going to charge me what the true costs were, but Bill intercepted, insisting I pay an inflated bill. This added up to a third the value of the car, for the wheels only. The service manager protested (apparently seeing I was being raped), but Bill ignored him and charged me. Knowing I was being robbed, yet not knowing what else to do, I paid it.

#### **Particle - One Jew Who Didn't Help Me, or Did He?**

This was just another of those woeful experiences where I had no understanding and no heart for instruction, and I suffered the consequences of my foolish ways. I had no direction and was not ready for any.

Bill's dealership was not there much longer. It seems I saw it gone after only a few short years, if that. His ways do not prosper anyone. I have spoken of Jews that helped me in my life. This was one that hurt, but I needed it. I eventually sold my Isuzu privately at quite a discounted price and rushed headlong to more folly.

#### **Particle - Partnerships**

David Miller and I decided to purchase a new home at 4810 Eldridge Avenue in Charleswood. My father strongly advised against a partnership, having had at least one bitter experience in his past

with Henry Broccanier partnering with him in a bulldozer business, clearing land. Broccanier absconded, leaving my father with liability. As usual, I did not listen.

I now realize that Dad deserved what he got. He was forever breaking promises to his own children, and who knows what else he did? We only reap what we sow, and get what we need and deserve.

### **Particle - Lesbian Entertainment**

My friends and I decided to hire a lesbian couple to perform for us. Why the perverse entertainment?

And why do I write about it? So that you will know how I lived and the kind of person I have been. Furthermore, if I condemn homosexuals, then I must, of necessity, condemn myself, for I was there with them, **paying** them. The Bible says that homosexuality is an abomination to God, and though I was never a homosexual, I was still there with them. Therefore, I am no better, though I should have every right to say it is wrong, if nature, reason, and the Bible serve as credible authorities.

### **Particle - Oral Sex**

I also indulged in oral sex. People speak of it today as though it is normal, and I realize that passion at the height of sexual excitement can momentarily drive one to do many things. I think, however, that oral sex is disgusting and a filthy bestial act that altogether degrades our Maker. I was there, I did it, I am ashamed of it, and I want everyone to know that no one will be able to stand before God with innocence, having done such things without repentance. Plainly, it is sodomy.

### **Particle - An Auto Seed Planted**

Don McLeod (Gerry McClintock's cousin) took on a car salesman's job and dropped by our Eldridge home sometime between 1968 and 1970 with a new Dodge Challenger, hoping to sell us. There was something about that car that captured my imagination. I sat behind the wheel and was impressed by the sight and feel, but I knew there was no way I could afford to buy it without getting into financial trouble. The time would come, however....

### **Particle - Mock Ministry and Marriage**

One day several of us singles were drinking in our home in Charleswood. My roommate, Dave, was entertaining a girl, and I decided to imitate a Ukrainian Catholic priest, blessing and marrying them (I was still nominally Catholic at the time). Though I was drunk, I must say that, in conscience, I was uncomfortable with what I was doing. Today I see the fallacy of the Catholic Church and its presumptuous power exercised over souls in the Name of God (I didn't see it then), but I still would not do what I did.

### **Particle - An Answer to the Prayer of a Sinner**

One morning as I was driving my Isuzu to work, I hit ice. At that time, I was financially desperate, with debt payments consuming almost my entire income. Another accident was more than I could bear. As the car skidded straight for a large tree, I shouted, "God, no!" (There was a plea for mercy in the spirit of the shout, though I don't recall any other words.)

The car swerved away from the tree, climbed onto the sidewalk, passed between that tree and another, and got back on the road. The path of the car made no sense; I was amazed and, needless

to say, so very relieved. I think the scare and perhaps the reprieve from above made me seek a little harder to correct my ways.

Many years later, something very similar would happen to me.

#### Particle - **Bay Bosses**

The Bay came to be a pressure cooker for me. As a management trainee, my immediate boss was the department manager. I started under Eugene Bunka in Basement Housewares. While he was easy to get along with, he really did not take the time to train me as a department manager. He was soon replaced by Don Sproule, not a trainer either, then Bob Richards, a young Bachelor of Commerce graduate who, while willing to teach me, was not capable.

#### Particle - **Flirting with Adultery**

I remember getting emotionally and romantically involved with a married woman, Cheryl Norrington, at the Bay. She was going through a hard time in her marriage. We were in the Bay curling league, which met each week, and we went to the bar with others afterwards. She found solace and comfort with me because of her situation, though I didn't know it at the time.

Had we followed through, it would not have been good. A negative or selfish foundation is never a true one. As it turned out, she reconciled with her husband, Ted, and I was told that things were better for them, for which I am thankful. I met Ted once and appreciated him.

The potential for adultery lurks everywhere, a dangerous predator.

#### Particle - **Recurring Nightmare of Stolen or Vandalized Car**

Because I was too cheap to pay for monthly parking at the Bay, I would park blocks away on a residential street, never in the same place. I did not always pay attention to where I parked, particularly when I had a hangover. More than once, at the end of the day, I would search for my car up one street and down another, beginning to wonder if someone had stolen it.

What foolishness! A recurring nightmare developed as a result, troubling me for many years. But with all those other dreams, it would be taken care of.

#### Particle - **Recurring Nightmare of Stolen Shoes or Coat**

Drunken parties are nowhere to be for many reasons. One of the lesser reasons not commonly considered is that if you are the last to leave, the choice of shoes and coats becomes rather limited. I once had an old pair of shoes waiting for me, to replace a quality new pair. I believe I also had a coat taken at one time. A recurring nightmare developed - which would also be taken care of. Are you looking forward to how that happened?

Yet, I still consider, when I remove my shoes somewhere, if it is safe to do so.

#### Particle - **Open House - BYOB**

Gerry McClintock, Dave Miller, and I somehow got it into our heads to have a party at our place, 4810 Eldridge Avenue - a big one. This was in the dead of a Winnipeg winter. As we frequented the

many pubs, beginning six to eight weeks before the date of the party, we passed on messages to everyone. All were welcome to the BYOB (bring your own booze) party, friends and strangers alike.

When the time came, it was a cold night, somewhere between -20 and -30 degrees Fahrenheit. We thought the party was going to bomb. We thought wrong. They came, with their own booze - cars and cars of them from many parts of Winnipeg. The streets were crammed with parked vehicles on both sides for blocks in all directions. Every square foot, including the stairs of the house, was jammed with people coming and going until the wee hours of the morning. People drank, smoked, danced, and talked. Apparently all had a good time.

We wondered if the neighbors would complain about us and if the police were going to show up, but it didn't happen.

Did we have a mess on our hands to clean for the next few days! Strangely enough, however, there was nothing stolen or damaged except the towel bar was partially pulled off the soft, finished drywall in the bathroom, obviously a tiny, unintended drunken accident. That was it!

As I write this, I realize how utterly foolish we were to do such a thing. I don't know that many would dare do that today, 40 years later.

George and Betty, our next door neighbors, talked and laughed about it, Marcel and Marie Marchessault talked and laughed about it (both older couples), as did other neighbors; they did not scold or fault us. Nobody experienced any kind of overt harm, although I suspect some neighbors could have had a bit of a sleepless night, wondering what was going on or what might happen.

### **Particle - Wrestling at a Wedding**

One day there was a wedding or celebration of some kind at a community hall in Gilbert Plains. Uncle Fred and Aunt Delores Molnar were there from Calgary, and I was in from Winnipeg. I always enjoyed Fred's company. He had a sense of humor and this deep, full, uninhibited laugh. We would joke and have a lot of fun.

We were drinking, getting to feel good, ended up challenging each other, and began to wrestle. Suddenly we were down, grappling and rolling together on the dusty dance floor. I had Fred in a headlock (I wasn't doing too badly - Fred was a few inches taller than I and a rather fit man). Suddenly, a crowd gathered around us and men came to break us up, concerned that a nasty brawl had broken out. With dirty suits, we got up from the floor, laughing. The crowd was relieved and Delores embarrassed, as were a few others, though some seemed rather entertained by it all.

Why do I tell of this incident with Uncle Fred? Log it in your memories for the future; you will hear "the rest of the story."

### **Particle - Another Shot at a Music Band**

At the Bay, Bob Richards, my department manager, played piano, an assistant department manager played bass, and Barry Cloutier, an assistant in Traffic, played drums. We tried to put together a band. It was hard finding a place to practice. A school gave us permission to use a classroom once a week or so.

One evening we brought in a six-pack of beer, the janitor saw it, kicked us out, and that was the end of our practice site, and our band. However much I tried to get a music band going, it didn't work out.

#### Particle - **My First Staff Management Challenge**

For the sake of honoring them now, more than I did when they worked for me, I would like to mention some of the staff, those I remember, in the Basement (Budget) Housewares/Toys/Lamps/Pictures/Luggage/Sporting Goods Department(s) (a conglomerate department):

The main supervisor, a competent lady, whose name I must admit I don't remember! Funny how some people fade from memory - I almost forgot her altogether. I do recall that she used to talk with glowing praise about the former manager, Earl Barrish, Eugene Bunka's immediate predecessor.

Mary Klopko, a responsible and conscientious supervisor;

Marge Howells, in charge of Luggage, Pictures, and Lamps;

Rose Sowa of Toys and Sporting Goods;

Angie, a temperamental cashier, though efficient.

Richard, a part-time stock boy and conscientious university student.

Another stock boy, Ron, was a violinist whom I had met before, cousin to my cousin Brian Romanchuk, a coincidence in a province of a million.

There was Marianne, the outdated blonde bombshell who was usually moody and uncooperative. In trying to correct her, she haughtily "sang" me the Johnny Paycheck song, long before it came out, "Take Your Job and Shove It." I was surprised, annoyed, relieved, and amused, all at once. The staff was glad to see her go.

The outstanding member on staff there, not for performance so much as for trouble, was Kerry Darragh. Officially, he was a stock boy, but his personality and idiosyncrasies made him almost everything else - salesperson, cashier, display artist, you name it. Kerry was a high school dropout, intelligent, fun loving, and full of devilry. He seemed to have no scruples, yet he somehow had the knack of sociably interacting with any around him. A character.

As the assistant department manager, I was responsible for him, but having been in the department longer, he knew more than I and would toy with me. As a supervisory challenge, he made up for the rest of the staff put together. His surname could have been spelled, "Dare-ah." He would try anything to sneak out of work. He would lie, cheat, flatter, promise, beg, borrow, or steal. He kept up with the times in hairstyle, fashions, fads, movies, jokes, shave lotions, nightclubs, martial arts, and pretty girls. He was funny, frivolous, and frustrating, not to mention self-destructive.

#### Particle - **An Apology to the Ladies of the Bay**

I must say that the pressure was on to perform. The economy was strained, and the retail business was changing on an intensified scale by 1970 and becoming more competitive. When I first arrived

there in 1967, the store manager was Don Rogers, succeeded temporarily by the District Superintendent, Mr. Evans, then by Bob Peters, known as the “axe man.” Lower management lived in fear.

My senior executive, John Behan, was on me, and I was on the staff. I could often see the strain in their faces. Julie, the supervisor in Basement Smallwares, another department over which I was manager, was so nervous at times she would tremble, but she was an excellent staff member in every way, conscientious, capable, and faithful. I wish I had had understanding for all these people.

To the ladies, their husbands, children, and all those related that I affected adversely, I apologize. Thank you for your faithfulness under pressure.

### **Particle - Recurring Nightmare of Bay Stairs**

The Bay had six floors. Often I would take the stairs rather than the elevator or escalator. For some reason it caused confusion in my mind. What floor am I on? What department am I in? Where is best to cross the floor? This developed into a recurring nightmare to last for nearly three decades...which would be taken care of, as the others.

### **Particle - A Boot Instead of a Glass Slipper**

Needing an assistant, and seeing me accomplishing very little as an assistant manager in the Housewares department, Ted Cronkite, manager of Basement Budget Women's, Men's, and Children's Shoes, approached Mr. Behan to have me transferred to his department. I thought, “Maybe now I'll get somewhere.”

It turned out to be a daytime nightmare. Ted was one who tried to appear nice, but was the very opposite. He was a tense man, not faring well under pressure, and with my obvious ineptitude as a shoe merchant, he became quite contemptuous of me. I was ready to leave the Bay.

After some time, Ted received a promotion as an eastern central buyer. When his replacement, Art Wakin, took over as manager, the nightmare turned into a most welcome pleasantry. Art was one who made it up the ranks in the Bay by hard work, without the benefit of an advanced education. I appreciated his down-to-earth considerateness. He was a patient, caring, hard-working boss who knew his business and stood under pressure well, and a sincere, though impersonal, friend. If you're there, Art, thank you and your wife both. When I met up with him a while later, he had left the Bay for Bata Shoes, I believe.

### **Particle - Basement Shoes Staff**

Bob Sargent, a favorite of Cronkite's, was a young fellow who tried very hard to climb the ladder of success in the shoe business at the Bay, without education, and failed. I think Ted thought of him as his personal assistant manager trainee, yet Ted had asked for me as his assistant - mixed signals, I would say. With Ted Cronkite's influence, Bob resented my presence as assistant manager, and I had the impression he was made to feel that I was interfering with his career opportunity.

There was also Wayne Pittendreigh, whom I met at MIT. He and I shared an interest in rock 'n roll and did some jamming together with the hopes of starting a band, which never materialized. Wayne was countryish, fun-loving, seemingly carefree (though not really), and had a lively sense of

humor. He liked to tease, but he was never nasty about it. He eventually met Linda, a nurse, and married. He went on to become a photography professor in Ryerson University, Toronto.

Others in the Bay Basement Shoes were Bill Keller, Jim Gibbons, Al Johnson, Joe Boivin, Cliff Rowe, Ann Polonski, Bertha Asselin, Mrs. Katz, Mrs. McCaskill, and several others, whose names now escape me.

#### **Particle - Working for the King in Wizard of Id**

When Mr. Behan finally promoted me to manager, he was my direct authority. While I liked the man, he could be rather rough and exasperated with me. He was always on my case, deservedly so. He should have fired me! I was incompetent and often late for work, being hung over.

He would get angry, growl, curse, scold, and emotionally jump up and down. Being no more than five foot three, and an expressive tyrant of sorts, Mr. Behan very much reminded me of the king in the cartoon strip, "The Wizard of Id." The managers got a kick out of him, joking behind his back.

Still, I had respect for him. He knew his business, and he was able to communicate concepts and principles. I have sometimes thought that if I had been trained directly by him, with a little patience on his part, I could have learned retail management and enjoyed it. As it was, I attracted a lot of his wrath, because I was quite ineffective as a manager. In spite of all this, he frequently gave me promotions. I could not comprehend what seemed to be mixed signals.

#### **Particle - Other Bay Basement Executives**

There were three junior executives I recall in our Basement division, Maurice McCarthy and Terry Lawrie, university grads, both friendly, decent fellows. They were both married.

And there was Rick Edwards, who was from MIT, and who, I believe, was our college president and valedictorian. Rick seemed head and shoulders above me in business and social know-how, besides being about six foot six. He soon married Diane, a tall, pretty woman from MIT, and it appeared the world was at his feet.

Years later, I found him at the Bay in Regina as a senior executive merchandise manager of a division of several departments. On the marital side, he and his college bride had divorced. I spoke to him of how God had changed my life, and he was listening, though he said nothing.

Among other Basement Division managers, there was Howard Davey of Ladies' Wear - a rather suave fellow who trained Terry Lawrie; Don Sproule of Housewares and later Hardware - not so suave, but an okay guy; Charlie Klein, over Men's Furnishings, who came in from the northern Bay stores, and whom I met again years later with his wife after the spiritual change in my life; Ron, who ran Men's Furnishings for a while; Don Brennick, a renegade manager of Men's Budget Suits; and Mark Blumes, who replaced Brennick when he was appointed buyer in eastern Canada. Mark later left the Bay and began a chain across Canada called Mark's Work Wearhouse, a business that continues to this day, though Mark died of heart disease years ago.

#### **Particle - Cholera Contagious**

There is a proverb that says:

**“Make no friendship with an angry man; and you shall not go up with a man of fury, lest you learn his ways and get a snare to your soul” (Proverbs 22:24-25 MKJV).**

I learned to express myself in anger to those below me, even as John Behan and Ted Cronkite did with me. Indeed, anger is a snare to the soul. This I know, because it has been a very difficult problem for me, but God has been faithful to help.

Take the advice of this proverb if you can, before it is too late. Habitual anger establishes itself and, like many bad habits, is well nigh impossible to eliminate or control.

I am told that those sexually abused are more inclined to become such abusers, so I suppose this principle works in all areas, with both man and beast. I have seen vicious dogs, made vicious by certain kinds of abuse.

### **Particle - High Stakes on Low Steaks**

On one Bay Day sale, the biggest sale of the year with the best sale prices at the Bay, I was called upon to help in the Grocery department. They had a “9:30 AM Special” - T-bone steaks for \$1 per lb. People came rushing down the stairs to the grocery department, not only tripping over, but even tripping, one another.

Arriving at the sales counter, they jostled madly for the meat. There was no limit on quantities purchased, but there was a limit on quantities available. When people cried for more, I filled a grocery cart in the back. As I approached the swinging metal doors to take the steaks to the floor, I was accosted in the doorway. In a minute, the steaks were gone.

I felt like a diver in a bloody fish tank full of sharks. The next cart of steaks I sent rolling through the doors by itself. Such madness! Such greed! People were fighting each other for the bargain. Some of the staff were quite uneasy about what they were seeing in human nature.

### **Particle - No Friend to Friends**

I have another regret in my past that I wish to relate for others' sakes. Jim Puls and I were best friends in Dauphin before I moved to Winnipeg. When I was working at the Bay, Jim was getting married in Dauphin to Eileen, a Ukrainian girl we had met together at a party in Gilbert Plains a year or two before.

When we first met her, there was some competition between Jim and me. I was a bit jealous that Jim won Eileen's favor. I didn't want to face the apparent defeat at the wedding. This was silly or stupid of me, but it was what was going on, I confess with embarrassment.

I was also expecting Jim to make me his best man, but when I moved to Winnipeg, he developed a closer friendship in Dauphin with another acquaintance, Don Kadeschuk, a friendly fellow, and Jim decided on Don instead. I was invited and asked to usher, if even that, and I was disappointed about it.

Added to these things, I had used up my weekends off at the Bay, and I was afraid that I could not press for so much as one more.

In retrospect, I believe the right thing would have been to honor a friend, even if I had lost the honor with him to a degree. I should have put a friend before my ego and career. But I didn't do it,



being cowardly, petty, and generally stupid. I know Jim was offended because he casually brought it up more than once; still, he remained friendly and receptive of me.

I was never any good at treating friends as friends. I was selfish, self-centered, insecure, highly insensitive of others' feelings and wishes, yet very sensitive of my own, so easily offended. I was never "connected" to anyone. I could see people mourning over the death or loss of friends but could never relate to it.

### **Particle - The Magic of Money-Making Holidays**

Amway spawned an avalanche of a fairly uncommon breed of businesses when it began in 1959 as a multilevel wholesale/retail organization of independent distributors who would personally sponsor others into their individual branches, known as downlines. With Amway's fabulous success, many other wealth-seekers entered the market trying to capitalize on a "pyramid" marketing scheme (Amway was not exactly the same as this, but many people deemed it so).

Theoretically (and legally), distributors were to sell retail and encourage a minimum amount of personal, direct retail sales by their distributors to qualify monthly as Amway distributors in good standing. After all, without product reaching the ultimate consumer, there would be no business. The problem was, many wished to be distributors making big money sponsoring others who would sell, without having to sell product themselves, especially laundry detergent, a primary product of Amway.

In came those companies to do just that - sponsor for the big bucks and ignore the retail sales to the consumer - a recipe for sure disaster, not as much for those who started at the ground floor as for those who would be left standing in the frenzied musical chairs grab for wealth.

I started receiving surprise calls from people I hadn't heard from in years and with whom I never had much to do. They tried to sponsor me into businesses that promised unusually prompt wealth and independence. One such call was from Orest, whom I knew from the Catholic Church in Dauphin.

In the initial call, Orest would not tell me the name of the company or the nature of the business or product. He only told me he wanted to bring me to a meeting where I would learn of a wonderful, if not unbelievable, business opportunity that was fresh on the market, something I would not want to miss. He wouldn't accept my driving independently to the meeting; instead, he picked me up.

I have never been to a meeting charged with more enthusiasm, real or fake. The hoopla was obviously intended to sweep people off their feet and get them to pull out their checkbooks and join on the spot. The promise was that anybody signing up was going to make phenomenal amounts of money in short order with little effort.

It would be so easy! There were so many benefits to being self-employed. We would be set for life with no more demanding bosses, no more time cards to punch, free to come and go, having downline people working for us while we celebrated, slept in every day, and generally enjoyed our many carefree pleasures. We would have tax write-offs while taking holidays, claiming all our entertainment as business expenses! A few persons stood up and testified to having made many times more in months than they and others had made in years of hard work.

Holiday Magic was the company, a distributor of unique cosmetics. I recall that the primary sales package for a distributorship was \$5,000, which was a lot of money to the average individual in those days.

I disappointed Orest, not having the money even if I wanted to sign up. I might have been able to borrow it, as he suggested, but thankfully, I wasn't "positive-minded" enough to fall for the get-rich-quick scheme. I later heard reports of many with inventories of cosmetics "rotting" in their closets and basements, making payments on loans they incurred to get sucked...uh...rich.

### **Particle - My Parents' 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

I believe my parents' Silver Anniversary was in 1969 at the Dauphin Ukrainian Catholic Hall. I have only one memory of the event.

Well into the evening, my father took my mother by the hand and began to prance along the perimeter of the main dance hall before the people who sat against the walls all around. He proceeded to do some kind of strange dance/walk combination. It was awkward, erratic, pretentious, and without form or pattern, except that it was plain uncoordinated and silly.

He was not pretending to be funny. He was serious and emotional. I believe he was trying to express or display some sort of worth or importance of both this occasion and himself, as though he felt he needed to get something out of this milestone in his life. Otherwise, it seemed he had nothing else to offer, no speech, nothing.

How did his friends and family take it? I saw my mother quietly and humbly sticking with him through the ordeal, which lasted perhaps five minutes. As their son, I felt more badly for them than for myself. As the people watched, some seemed embarrassed by his strange contortions, but most seemed to understand and overlooked his weakness. He was known to do silly things, though this seemed to be the first formal, public scene of such. Perhaps those looking on were sympathetic with my mother, who seemed to take it well, without any resistance or significant trouble with humiliation.

I think people understand that we are all fools deep down, to be honest about it, and we are all capable of the same things, no matter what they are. Perhaps they sensed that my father was brave enough to be silly before all, whereas they would not dare make their weakness manifest publicly. Indeed, I think it may even have endeared him to some. Certainly, he was not going to be a threat to anyone's dignity.

He was not drunk that I know of, though some certainly would have suspected it, and I expect that he was likely feeling good from some liquor. It was a strange scene. If one were to ask him why he did it, I don't know that he would be able to answer. Except for perhaps the hard-hearted cynic who does not know his own capacity for the same, I suspect each of us knows we can do bizarre and foolish things that have no explanation.

### **Particle - Abusing Friend and Sowing for Trouble**

When Ken Buehner, our roomer, did not pay his rent (which Dave and I split 50/50), he gave me some Queen Anne cookware as partial payment. I kept the cookware for my share of the rent due, but I should have shared it with Dave. When Dave complained of injustice, I brushed him off. The day would come when he would receive his share back from my pocket, dozens of times over.

(Dave, it never occurred to me to apologize to you for that incident. In fact, I forgot about it for years to come. I apologize now. I'm very sorry.)

### **Particle - Giggers**

Beware of giggers. Everything is funny when nothing is funny.

Henry Broccanier giggled a lot. He betrayed my father.

Ed Boyechko was forever giggling and forever betraying me. His brother Dennis also giggled. They were insecure, being raised in an insecure home, where the father scorned and openly mocked the mother. Parent against parent breeds insecurity in children. How can it not?

Mike Trepanier (of whom you will hear more) was ever giggling. He betrayed me.

There was Norm "Tree" Morrison, who left me owing his share of the rent of an apartment; he was always giggling.

And there was Ken Buehner, who forever giggled and left David Miller and me with rent due and never returned - from which further complications arose, by my great foolishness.

### **Particle - Friends of Friends Not the Best of Friends**

Have you ever noticed how one will attract companions from different directions and bring them into his personal group of friends? Gerry McClintock was a personality who did that with those whom I personally would not have sought out as close friends.

Dave Miller was such a rather awkward relation to me - he was Gerry's personal choice of friend and not mine. There was nothing particularly wrong with him; he had his weaknesses and strengths, as with all. I think I simply lacked empathy or closeness with him. In spite of this, we went into buying and living in a house together.

It was a similar situation with Ed Korpan in junior high. He was the extroverted ringleader who attracted a variety of people. I would not have chosen Ken Dowson and Wayne Childs for personal friends, but Ed was our social common denominator. Outside of him, we had nothing to do with one another. But I had lots to do with Dave. Things could have been better, had I been a decent fellow, but I wasn't.

### **Particle - No Mercy for the Distressed**

My former roommate, Rick Steinke, rented a room from us. I deeply regret getting after him to get a job when he was out of work, having no sympathy or patience while watching him sit and play guitar in his bedroom month after month, going drinking with his buddies, and falling behind on his rent. Rick, wherever you are, I apologize. (I owe many people apologies.)

While from an outward appearance of what was happening with you, my reaction might have been common among many landlords, I had no capacity to be helpful and understanding, as a friend should. I'm sorry.

### **Particle - Dale Carnegie**

While working at the Bay, a newspaper ad for the Dale Carnegie Course in Public Speaking caught my attention. I enrolled and discovered my fear of speaking publicly, but also gained victory over that problem, as did others in my class. The course awakened in me an awareness of, and desire for, a better life in terms of how we ought to treat one another. I longed to have purpose and find virtue in myself and others, like truth, understanding, goodness, respect, sincerity, positive thinking, liberality, courage, conviction, and love.

Roger Black, the fellow holding the Carnegie franchise for Winnipeg, was enthusiastic and inspiring. While we participants experienced a sort of camaraderie, it was barely a whiff of what I desired out of life. Still, it was an alert to better things.

### **Particle - Personality Prisons for Presumptuous People**

I would see this lesson laid out before me more than once: Alan King also attended the Carnegie course, and he had a painful time in front of the class, being so subdued. One day he talked about something personal in his life, and something broke. He saw that he wasn't rejected or scoffed at.

From that day forward, not only was he confident to speak before others, he was bold. Unlike previously, he would even lightly taunt and defy me, and I suspect others as well. Quite a change. Sometimes I wonder if people might not be better off in their shackles of shyness.

### **Particle - My First Childhood Companion's Lot**

Who should I meet up with, after a Carnegie public speaking class, in a restaurant but Raymond McKillop, my childhood neighbor friend who taught me to speak English! Raymond was thin, bashful, his face badly marred with acne, and I was told, a bachelor, and an alcoholic. He was farming his father's land, the same land we knew as children. Raymond had very little to say; he seemed so awkward socially.

His mother had spoiled Raymond rotten. She worshipped him, gave him what he wanted, and in her eyes, he could do no wrong. Once when he was about eight, his father Russell was giving us a ride home from school in a team-drawn sleigh wagon. Raymond showed off in front of us against his father, disobeying and talking back.

This continued until Mr. McKillop got very angry and tried to discipline him. Raymond, being selfish and proud, a typical brat, would not submit. His father spanked him in front of us all, and Raymond was very embarrassed, trying to laugh while crying.

People commented on how Raymond later was not going to fit in with society. They were right. He was psychologically shortchanged and socially destroyed by lack of discipline, thanks to his mother. No wonder the wise proverb:

***“Don't hesitate to discipline children. A good spanking won't kill them. As a matter of fact, it may save their lives” (Proverbs 23:13-14 GNB).***

Raymond, if you should read this, take heart; listen to me, there is hope, most definitely. There is hope for **anyone** at **any** time. All you need to do is let go of your pride and turn to God, Who is there, here, now. This world isn't the end of it.

And don't be bitter toward your mother. She was wrong, but so have we all been, you and I, everyone, one way or another. All you need to do is read my story, which you are, hopefully. I can

tell you these two things that I have learned: There is nothing too hard for God, and there is never any need to despair.

(Thus far, the reader has not seen the change or positive side for me, but look what happens next.)

#### Particle - **Seventh Injury a Mercy Stroke**

One fateful day, Mary Jane Junker, a young, pretty fashions salesclerk at the Bay who had a crush on me, invited me to go skiing at a ski hill south of Winnipeg. I accepted and spent the day with her and friends on the slopes. This was, I think, my second time out with them. I had not the slightest inkling of the pending painful, but very significant, redirection of my life.

Several factors led up to what happened. I was a total novice, overweight, somewhat drunk, and though those with me had learned how to ski, I was trying to keep up with them. On the legendarily treacherous last run of the day, I fell and severely tore everything in my right knee (I broke no bones, however). I was tobogganed off the slope and my friends drove me back to Winnipeg.

Not having a family doctor, they asked where they should take me. Bill Nairn drove me to the Misericordia Hospital, which was Catholic. Why there, I don't know. He may have been Catholic, or it may have been simply the handiest hospital.

I was booked in, weighed, bedded, and my knee packed in ice. I was in pain, and there would be much more of it in the days to come. For days, they could not operate until the swelling came down. My injury was serious. I can still recall nearly going through the roof when they inserted a large hypodermic needle into my knee to drain it.

It was at this time that God set me down, and I began to experience a subtle work within me, though I had no idea what was happening. Years later, in retrospect, I would come to realize this injury was indeed a "mercy stroke" (the meaning of "Misericordia"). The event would turn out to be a watershed, a tremendous blessing in the disguise of a tragedy.

#### Particle - **Dr. Duncan Croll, a Special Specialist**

For my repair, God provided Dr. Duncan Croll, an aged, experienced, skilled surgeon who was reputed to have done marvelous work on wounded soldiers in WW2, enabling men to have a normal life who were predicted by specialists to never walk again. He was a brusque, outspoken man, often scolding me for one thing or another, but I didn't mind. I was humored, actually.

He always wore white gloves because he had a chronic case of eczema; I walked into his private office months later and saw close to a hundred pairs of laundered white gloves hanging everywhere, tended by his eccentric secretary.

I recall waking up in the middle of the operation, and he said to me, "Son, you sure did a job on your leg. It looks like a cat got in there and clawed away, shredding everything." They gave me another shot of sodium pentothal, and my lights went out.

I again woke up in the elevator on the way to recovery and overheard the nurses talking about how unusually long the operation had been (over four hours), and how Dr. Croll was so painstakingly thorough.

Because I was about 35 pounds overweight, he put me on a 1,200-calorie diet. He told me that I was going to have to ease the burden on my leg. I lost 28 pounds in the 35 days I was in the hospital, 28 of those days flat on my back in traction. I was discovering that one of the fastest ways to lose weight was to go skiing, provided you did it right - or not. Who says you need exercise to lose weight? Just break a leg. Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig, you have nothing over drunken skiing.

I found out later that there had been some medical consideration of fusing my knee. Thankfully, they didn't, and I have lived a normal life for the most part, able to do most things with a minimum of discomfort to this day, several decades later.

### **Particle - Bachelor's Mini-Paradise**

I didn't know Heaven was an upper storey of the Misericordia Hospital. My window overlooked a main traffic route to city center and the Bay. Being winter, with temperatures -30 degrees Fahrenheit or colder, and watching the frosted-up cars spewing their condensing exhaust into the frigid air, I was very thankful for not having to drive to work - or in the nicest of weather, for that matter.

I was also thankful to have my meals prepared. I was amazed at how good hospital food was! Who's the liar who said hospital food is bad? As a bachelor acquainted with faring for himself with no cooking skills and no interest in the culinary, this was a privilege. Besides, being on a diet, I was hungry and enjoyed what I got when I got it. Even the hunger was enjoyable - I was thankful to lose weight.

I was also thankful that my friends smuggled in Southern Comfort, which I hid in my flower vase. I was thankful to make friends of the patients. I went through perhaps six or more roommates in my semi-private room, but I had no desire to leave.

Another change was occurring, too - I was thankful to have ordinary conversations with the nurses and talks of spiritual matters with the nuns and the visiting priest.

### **Particle - Dreams of Miraculous Healing**

Oh, how I wished my accident had never happened! And here is a strange thing: I did not believe in miracles, I was not a believer, yet I had dreams wherein God completely healed my leg. I always woke up disappointed, yet expecting or hoping that one day it would happen.

### **Particle - Companions in the Hospital**

Ché, a patient while I was there, was a young, intelligent paraplegic who had big dreams. He spoke of meeting Johnny Cash's brother, Tommy, cutting a record and becoming a music star someday. I didn't know if Johnny Cash had a brother named Tommy. I do now.

But I felt he was making up stories out of an escapist frame of mind. I don't know if Ché could sing. I don't recall his last name, but I do recall that Dianne Heatherington, a local Winnipeg rock and folk singer, came to visit him. Dianne seemed to have some interest in reaching out to handicapped or disadvantaged people.

Dolores Barber was a young hairdresser, I believe. When we were released from the hospital, I invited Ché and her over to my Charleswood home. I later dated Dolores a few times for sexual favors.

### **Particle - Scare and Rescue**

I was in the hospital for 35 days, 28 of those in traction. I went from bedpan to wheelchair to crutches before I was sent home. My leg was cast from hip to toe.

Once home, it was not long before we threw a party. I was using my crutches when I headed down the stairs with some guys. I wasn't doing very well because, as I began the descent, I had both crutches under my arms and their ends set on the step together with my good leg. My bad leg was naturally forward. I suddenly began to keel forward, locked on the two crutches under my arms. I had no way of escaping the plunge forward and down.

A sudden alarm rushed through my whole being. "Oh God!" I cried within. I thought I was on my way back to the hospital if I made it out from this one alive. I had nothing to protect me from going face down on the uncarpeted stairs and smashing into the cement wall and floor at the bottom.

As I look back, I see that God provided deliverance at this moment. Gary Slobodian was right beside me and caught me, even though things happened so fast. He picked me up, while others took my crutches, and carried me down. They said my face was as white as a sheet. I don't remember being so thankful for any human being in my life as I was for Gary at that moment!

He was powerful. There was a day when he, Dave Miller, and I went hunting deer, and Dave bagged a sizable buck. It was perhaps a mile or more in the bush in snow halfway up to our knees or higher, so it was a lot of work to bring it back to our vehicle, though we had gutted it.

By the time we got back, Dave and I were tuckered out, and Gary was pulling the buck by himself, not bothering to take breaks with us! We marveled at his strength and endurance. This is the guy provided to be right beside me when I was falling. God was merciful.

Of course, God could have prevented me from being in such a situation. So why did this happen? A message was coming through to me - there I was, fresh out of the hospital with a serious injury and months of physio waiting for me, cruisin' for another bruising by my boozin', wayward, and reckless lifestyle.

It was a wake up call, an alert in my innermost being to set myself to reconsider the way I was living (or rather, dying) and to get earnest about my direction in life.

### **Particle - A Healer in Need of Healing**

Months later, when visiting the hospital for physiotherapy, I spotted Dr. Croll sitting alone in the hospital cafeteria. Would I be a bit presumptuous to sit down with him for a few minutes? I thought, "It can't hurt." After the few minutes were over, I heard words from him that surprised me: "Thanks for taking the time to sit down and talk with a lonely old man."

Oh God, how I see that I could have been more sensitive and able to reach out to him and so many others throughout my life! How people are hurting everywhere, not just the poor and ignorant, but the wealthy, famous, important, skilled, and educated! They are all people with common feelings, troubles, infirmities, and needs, in many cases being more lonely than the common man.

### Particle - **Three and a Half Months and the Search Begins**

I was off work for *three and a half months* and in physiotherapy for much longer. For the first month, I could only think of the work mounting at my desk, but soon they appointed two assistant managers to take my place. For the second month, I went into neutral and did not seem to think much about anything.

It was in the third month that I began to ponder the simple, yet profound, questions of life. A search within me for more meaning to life gradually intensified. I began to ask questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What's it all about? Is there a God? Will He talk to me? What does He want from me? What is the most worthwhile thing a person can do with his life? I began to seek out various causes, philosophies, and religions.

### Particle - **Sponsorship Control in Amway**

During my convalescence at home, my renter friend Rick Steinke got me involved in what I now call the "Amway importunity." I started to sponsor people who then went out selling. John Buller and Ken Buehner were two of four. We were rather excited, and the whole thing seemed free and spontaneous.

Soon, seeing the activity in their downline, my upline Direct Distributors Ralph and Lenore Eidse of Morris, Manitoba came along to assume control and authority. We soon lost that "magic feeling," an innocence and spontaneity. It became "work."

What is the secret to knowing when to let children find their own way and when to intervene? Or is it a matter of having the wisdom to know when and how to direct? Come to think of it, when Rick Steinke sponsored me, in his simplicity, he did no more than get me an Amway kit and let me at it. His way seemed much wiser than that of the Eidses.

### Particle - **Enter Christian Evangelicals**

Lenore was an evangelical believer of Mennonite background. She and others in the business shared things with me concerning faith in God, planting seeds I suspect eventually bore fruit. Amway was an attraction to evangelicals, I suppose partly because its founders, Rich DeVos and Jay Van Andel, were evangelical - Christian Reform. God used Lenore Eidse and other evangelicals in Amway to work something in me.

I was so enthused about Amway, thinking that unless one was an Amway distributor, one was not doing what he or she ought to be doing. Of course, that did not make sense; however, I think it was the expressed principles of morality and ethics that appealed to me.

I once made the statement publicly that God sent Rich DeVos and Jay Van Andel to show everyone how business ought to be done. While they introduced many good principles and ideals, and many would do well to heed the principles they taught (though reportedly did not necessarily practice), I was wrong in what I said. Years later, I would learn quite differently.

### Particle - **Healers Don't Know It All**

Lenore had heard of [Bert Kynman](#), a lively massage therapist, perhaps a physical therapist, in his late 50's, who worked with sports people, even the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, I believe. He was



reputed to be very good at what he did, having done some wonderful things for those who had serious injuries, restoring capability and hope for them to live normal lives, perhaps even to indulge in stressful sports again. Lenore thought Bert might be able to help me recover with his expertise in physical therapy. This was in 1971 while I was in Amway receiving physiotherapy at Winnipeg General Hospital.

As he was treating me, he was full of energy. He told me his “secret” - Vitamin E. “D-alpha, not L-alpha,” he would emphasize, the former being natural, the latter synthetic. At his age he would leave behind young athletes huffing and puffing on the racetrack. There was controversy about how much Vitamin E one could safely ingest, if it should be taken as a supplement at all. Bert believed there was no harm in taking thousands of milligrams. It energized him, and he couldn’t see a problem. “They feed wheat germ, which is high in Vitamin E, to race horses. It’s good for the heart. Why shouldn’t it be good for us?” he argued.

I began to take it. While Bert took several thousand milligrams a day, I started with a few hundred and perhaps for a short time went up to a thousand. It did indeed invigorate me. About three years later, I heard the sad news - Bert Kynman died of massive heart failure. I think I heard he had collapsed on a racetrack. There were those who attributed his death to large doses of Vitamin E.

I resolved my intake would be no more than about 400 mg per day. Eventually, I stopped altogether, though I don’t believe there’s any harm in taking limited doses. Likely there’s some good, especially for those on a nutrient-poor diet.

The lessons: Always be careful of health advice, even such that produces apparently desirable results and which comes from apparently successful, healthy, knowledgeable people. Temperance in all things is wise counsel, even life-saving.

#### Particle - **Amway Divides, for Good**

I became friends with Ralph and Lenore Eidse and other Directs - Larry and Joan Shine, Gerry and Bev Krawchuk, Neil and Cathy Wiebe, and Art and Doreen Beals. My associations with the Amway opportunity began to divide me from my drinking friends. This division would be complete when a much more significant event than breaking my leg would take place in the near future.

One thing I noticed about my Amway Direct friends who were not in our leg or branch of the organization: We were competitors, and we could not relate to one another in complete comfort as friends - a flaw in this MLM business, and a shame. I now realize that I was desiring a fellowship, community, or society of friends, unselfish friends, true and good friends. I also realize that I had never been part of such a community, whether with my family or otherwise. One day, I would have my desire.

#### Particle - **The Power of a Pretty Woman**

What marvelous, if not bizarre, connections in life! Because Mary Jane Junker developed a childish crush on me, she persuaded me to come skiing with her, and I was injured and kept away from the Bay. Set off to the side, I began to contemplate more intensely the important questions of life.

It was also Mary Jane who was instrumental in my return to work. She persuaded me to attend a Bay staff party, though I was not fully recovered. I was able to go, however, so I went with her. At the party, Mary Jane had a few drinks and became attracted to Colin Laker, department manager of the Bay Men’s Clothing, a married man, handsome and entertaining, who also had a few drinks

and was wooing her after most people had left. In front of me, Mary Jane carried on with him and he with her, kissing and all. It was a humiliating affair. Nothing was said afterwards, but Mary Jane and I had nothing more to do with each other.

### **Particle - A Reluctant Return**

When Jerry J. Jellison, the personnel manager, witnessed at the party that I could get around, he thought I should also be able to come back to work. I was reluctant, not feeling quite ready physically or mentally, enjoying the freedom of a casual life and being away from the hectic pressures of the Bay. It didn't seem, however, that I had much choice.

Not only was I not happy with that kind of work (I never was), I had a growing sense of morality and search for meaning. I began to desire to do something more fulfilling and noble than retail merchandising. I thought of developing and improving human and public relations skills on a personal and business occupational level - perhaps the Dale Carnegie course was having its impact on me.

Charles DeManby was a recent executive of the Bay, hired to deal with just these kinds of matters with Bay personnel. I had a few talks with him, but they didn't seem to go anywhere. Charles chose to be rather neutral on personal matters. While I was prepared to wade into deeper waters and talk about my personal struggles, he was only willing to risk the knee-deep waters of impersonal policy, principle, and theory. As I look back, I realize that my quest had become a spiritual one, beyond any man's ability to comprehend, much less deal with.

The next thing I was thinking of was the environment and how I might get involved to improve the world. I began entertaining serious thoughts of resigning from the Bay.

### **Particle - The Pain of Parting**

Though I was not happy there, one of the hardest things I did in my life was resign from the Bay. It had been my first professional occupation, lasting just over four and a half years. There was security, a sense of status, and an okay income. The Bay had graciously paid my salary during my convalescence. I had bills to pay, and if I left, my only foreseeable income was the Amway business, which at the time was not paying - it was costing. Besides, I was still somewhat physically incapacitated. Despite all of this, I grew in conviction that I had to leave.

In my first attempt to resign, I took the escalators from my department in the basement to the personnel office on the top floor. Before I reached the office, I turned around and went right back down.

In my second attempt, I made it to see Jerry Jellison, who talked me out of it, suggesting that my accident would have had a psychological impact that needed patience and time to heal. I asked him about integrity and treating customers with respect and unselfishness. I suggested that if the Bay did so, customers would be pleased, faithful, increasing, and the Bay would flourish. Though Mr. Jellison seemed to be a great guy, commending me for my thoughts, he did not seem to catch the vision.

Finally, I returned to him a third time, firm that I could not remain. He accepted my resignation, and within two weeks, I was gone.

How Mary Jayne Junker was used to change my life, and in what strange ways! I also had once proposed to her - I think it was before the accident. She resisted, and I determined to use the positive thinking I learned at Dale Carnegie to persuade her to marry me, but she was not interested. Thankfully, it did not happen. God had other plans for her and for me.

I bumped into her in Winnipeg two years later; I was with a girlfriend, and she was with her husband. She seemed happy and gave me a hug. The chances of that meeting were astronomically low. God had arranged it for some reason.

#### Particle - **How Christ Is Unique**

Around that time, I discussed my search for meaning to life with Ernie Hafichuk, one of my favorite uncles. When I talked about various philosophies, religions, and religious founders, he spoke words that stuck with me.

“Victor,” he said, “first of all, Buddha, Muhammad, Krishna, and other religious leaders said, ‘Come and follow me; I will show you the truth or the way,’ but Jesus said, ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man comes to the Father but by Me.’ Second, the other men are still in their graves, but Jesus’ grave is empty. He is the only One raised from the dead. Third, history is divided according to His life, B.C. and A.D. This is not so for any other man. Those are some of the differences between Jesus Christ and all the others. They are all men, but He is God.”

Those words remained with me, though I strayed from the truth of them for a time.

#### Particle - **Male Bathroom Unmanners**

One evening while visiting Uncle Fred and Aunt Josie Hafichuk at 220 Rouge Road in St. James, I went to the washroom. The door was not shut completely. Assuming the room was free, I pushed on the door and found Uncle Fred on one knee at the toilet bowl, peeing. I said, “Excuse me,” and retreated. I thought, “What a henpecked husband!” (I saw Aunt Josie as quite thorough in her housekeeping and generally fussy about everything.)

Many men in certain segments of our less civilized society are generally accustomed to standing at the toilet to urinate. It was not until years after this incident that I realized what a filthy habit and attitude it was! Splashing occurs on everything all around the toilet and is, therefore, highly unsanitary. I have heard women complain about the filthy practice, and in our ignorance and crudity, we have ignored them, thinking nothing of it, even laughing it off. Yet they are the ones often having to do the cleaning.

We at Harvest Haven have a sign above a private toilet sometimes used by the public that says, “Gentlemen, please be seated.”

#### Particle - **Mother’s Counsel on Extramarital Sex**

My family knew, not from me but from others, that I was fornicating. They knew one or more of my partners, one of which was even confiding to them that she purposed to have my baby. One day my mother advised me: “Be careful; use protection.”

There are those who think that talking to someone about abstaining from extramarital sex is like asking pigs to fly or birds not to, and in not a few cases, that certainly is so. They conclude that “safe sex” with the use of condoms is the wisest advice they can give.

I disagree. While I was a lawless fellow, I think it would have served me well if my mother had spoken to me of morality, chastity, and God's ways, not of how I might eat the forbidden fruit and presume to get away with it. My mother's advice is not the advice a parent should give her children. And it is not the advice the educational and medical systems should give the public. It sends the wrong message altogether, taking people in the opposite direction from what is right.

#### Particle - **Concept-Therapy, Forming God**

Some of us in Amway became involved in Concept-Therapy, a philosophical system founded by Thurman Fleet of San Antonio, Texas. It promised all one could wish in terms of spiritual and temporal wealth and power. Harry Roder, a certified instructor and former evangelical minister from Ontario, came to Winnipeg, holding weekend meetings at John and Betty Fortins'.

Though I thought CT's fees were high, I became very motivated and excited about the concepts, and I aspired to be an instructor. They promised that once completing a series of weekend sessions over several years in various cities of North America, one would enter cosmic consciousness, a state of peace, power, and fulfillment, with access to all knowledge. It was about being at one with all creation and the intelligent power of the universe, and being able to harness this power to great advantage. They taught that their sources of learning were science and the Bible, the best of both worlds.

One day, at a short break in the meeting, I gazed at a chart on the wall that symbolically depicted the seven phases of the spiritual journey, the seventh being the temple of all knowledge, the state of cosmic consciousness. While others stood by, I asked Harry, out of curiosity, where he was at on the chart. His reaction surprised me. He was silent.

Others were interested in his answer, and they waited for him to reply. Thinking perhaps he had not heard me, and tingling with curiosity, someone said, "Harry, Victor asked you a question."

"And he'll be a long time getting an answer!" he angrily shot back. In my naivety, I subconsciously thought, "If he has arrived, why is he so upset? What did I say? How can he teach cosmic consciousness if he is not in that state of arrival himself?"

I had many questions for Harry, none of which he could answer satisfactorily. Lenore told me later he asked others, "Who is that guy?"

#### Particle - **The Pleasurable Delusion of Mystic Philosophy**

The Eidses, Beals, Wiebes, Shines, Friesens (Jake and Irene), and I all enrolled in Harry Roder's Concept-Therapy sessions, which sent Art Beals and me on all kinds of "joy trips," seeing imaginary significances to everything around us. We were like little kids. While it was exciting and seemed greatly enlightening and promising, it led nowhere but to disillusion and disappointment. It is rather interesting, even amazing, how one can get so caught up in an empty philosophy that comes as a discovery with great promise, but delivers only sensation and artificiality. People are naturally inclined to joyfully embrace as truth anything but the truth.

#### Particle - **Jesus Christ Not a Pawn**

Evangelicals attending Concept-Therapy began to balk when, in pressing Harry to tell them where Jesus Christ fit into his scheme of things or what He meant to him, Harry reacted angrily, provoked

to boast that he could make Jesus Christ appear and stand in the aisle, ‘right there in front of them,’ in his next session.

That rather ended the value of his coming to Winnipeg thereafter. When reporting this to Jake Friesen, a Mennonite and Amway Direct who had not been there in that meeting, Jake remarked, “Well, even Harry Roder isn’t big enough for that!” I wondered what he meant, knowing he spoke the truth, but Jake didn’t elaborate.

#### Particle - **Dead to the Sorrowful**

Lenore Eidse confided to me that they had just lost a newborn infant. She was crying as she described the last few days of the infant’s struggle for life. I understand in part now; I didn’t then, not being a believer or a parent. I wish I had understood enough to help them. How sad and trying a time it was for them! How void I was of understanding, empathy, compassion, and yes, humanity!

#### Particle - **“Tremendous Charlie Jones”**

One of the highlights at that time was going to a “Tremendous Charlie Jones” motivational speech. The audience was thrilled! After the show, I came up to Charlie to tell him how much I enjoyed his speech. He, a big man (likely about six foot four), wrapped his arms around me in a big hug and lifted me off the floor.

I was impressed with the table beside him, overflowing with money and checks. I was equally impressed that he didn’t seem conscious or protective of that little treasure, though there were many people milling about. Somehow, I knew it was perfectly safe, that the goodwill he had generated would deter any evil intention or act toward him, or perhaps it was divinely protected, or both.

#### Particle - **No Duty? I’ll Take Them**

I aspired to be a motivational speaker after that, being so impressed by Charlie’s personality and popularity. I was that way - easily impressed and ready to go.

Charlie recommended several books for reading. I ordered them. When Canada Customs called me, notifying me that they were in, they asked me if they were religious books. I replied that they were not. They differed with me, telling me they qualified as religious because there were religious terms on nearly every page. I was surprised because I had no intention or desire for religious books. I argued with the agent, as though he was deciding what kind of books I would get.

Then he informed me there was no duty on religious material. He suddenly won the battle. I sheepishly stopped arguing and accepted the consolation prize. But I did not read the books. I was sorry I had spent the money on them. I was not interested in religion, or perhaps more accurately, in Jesus Christ.

#### Particle - **The Greatest Salesman in the World**

While into the motivational world with people like Earl Nightingale, Rich DeVos, and “Tremendous Charlie Jones,” I was reading a book highly recommended, *The Greatest Salesman in the World* by Og Mandino. I lasted eight or nine months with the scrolls, reading them faithfully at least three times a day, or as directed.

But I got to thinking, “OK, so I get to be the greatest salesman in the world - what would be the greatest product to sell?” Big ticket items? Real estate? Cars? Airliners? I really had no idea. I didn’t have any particular interest except to perhaps be a motivator. The day would come when that question was answered for me, and there would no longer be any doubt of it in my mind, ever.

#### **Particle - Visit to Ada**

The Shines, Krawchuks, and I became Direct Distributors simultaneously, which earned us the privilege of an all-expense-paid trip to Grand Forks, Michigan to visit Amway’s plant and headquarters at Ada. Rich and Jay were not there, but we were impressed. Amway executives and personnel treated us with great honor, pomp, and ceremony, as stars. The whole event was impressive - it was quite professionally done. The plant was huge and expanding, and the employees in it all seemed more content than anywhere else I had witnessed.

We were motivated. When we returned, Bert and Helen Huebner, the Diamond Directs in Winnipeg, held a breakfast meeting and had us give a public report, knowing full well how we would feel and taking advantage of our fresh enthusiasm for promotion’s sake.

#### **Particle - Amway: Not as Things Appear**

Dick Marks had been a policeman who was sponsored into Amway. He and his wife, Bunny, professing born-again Christians, became successful distributors, sponsoring Bert and Helen Huebner, Art and Doreen Beals, and others in Winnipeg. These in turn sponsored others; Winnipeg was one of Marks’ successful territories.

I was invited to the Huebner residence to meet the Marks. It was a privilege that came with being a Direct. I became aware, however, of elements behind the scenes that were somewhat unsettling, like the Directs having to “eat” the merchandise returned by customers and distributors (soap included!) and taking on other responsibilities that I thought the “benevolent” corporation was handling for both distributors and consumers.

Perhaps this was only understandable and reasonable. I only say that things were not as they appeared. They had declared, with all righteous fervor, a 100% satisfaction guarantee on all products. They had not declared that we, the Direct Distributors, would be backing the guarantee and eating soap.

#### **Particle - Marks for Mammon**

Dick and Bunny held a small convention in Winnipeg. Bunny dressed in furs and flashy jewelry. They enthusiastically spoke of Amway yacht trips and how they were treated as VIPs. They did their best to excite us about the financial glories and privileges of the world - a luxurious home, big cars, the benefits of self-employment, such as being your own boss, enjoying tax write-offs, traveling the world, vacationing, sailing, golfing, and sightseeing - while others work for you.

But there was a dark side to their lives; Bunny had a lethal disease.

How can we motivate people to seek the things of this world, when we know full well these cannot satisfy or deliver us from our troubles? Or didn’t they know? Dick and Bunny professed faith in Christ. But there was almost nothing said of Him. Rich DeVos and Jay Van Andel also professed faith. What were they saying to their star distributors to lead them spiritually? Or would it have been bad for business to bring Jesus Christ into the picture?

## **Particle - Ross Rally in Palm Springs**

Gordon and Edie Ross, Diamond Directs with Amway, held a convention in Palm Springs, California. I flew down and persuaded some of my downline to attend, paying their accommodations. Dennis and Linda Skuter came and brought people with them from Flin Flon, Manitoba - Tom Lacroix and his wife.

While there, I met Bill and Joan Laing from Ontario, Canada - Diamond Directs who were on the Amway board in Canada. Shaking hands with Bill, his eyes pierced me. I was guilty of doing business the way Amway declared it should not be done, selling more inventory to distributors than they were capable of retailing in any given month. I assumed that Bill knew the nature of my doings by reviewing the figures when determining how I reached Direct. They had not reprimanded me or even suggested I was doing anything wrong; nobody had, but it bothered me all the same.

## **Particle - Superfluous Possessions**

While in Palm Springs, we took a bus tour of the city. The driver pointed out a house Dean Martin owned. "Is he there?" someone asked. "Yes, he is, about one or two weeks of the year!" the driver quipped. "Who lives there the rest of the time then?" a passenger asked. "The gardener and housekeeper," was the reply. "Dean Martin has other properties as well."

That struck me. I thought, "What is this? A man owns a home, doesn't live in it, and pays people to take care of it and live in it. I would rather be the gardener! No investment, no responsibility, and I get to live in Palm Springs, a beautiful city Red Skelton told us was 'Heaven on earth'!"

## **Particle - The Price of Stardom and Wealth**

I had watched Liberace on the Ed Sullivan Show. As we boarded a plane to return home, there he sat in an aisle seat, a man beside him in the window seat. I immediately reached out to shake his hand and congratulate him on his achievements. The man next to him jumped and then relaxed when he perceived no threat. I assume he was a bodyguard, but I would have thought he would sit between the one guarded and the public.

Liberace, elegantly dressed, was quite gracious in the situation. He didn't seem threatened, smiled, shook my hand, and thanked me.

Someone else lives in Dean Martin's houses and Liberace goes nowhere without a bodyguard. People know you, but you don't know them. What is stardom and wealth all about? Who wants it, knowing the price?

## **Particle - Rude Revenue Ruffians**

Now that I was self-employed, I claimed all pertinent expenses. Seeing accounting and bookkeeping were not my thing, and H&R Block tax services guaranteed good results or a refund in full, I asked them to do my 1971 tax return.

Soon after, Revenue Canada notified me they would come to my house to talk to me.

It was a very unpleasant affair. A young fellow came and treated me like I had deliberately cheated Canada out of due taxes. I was surprised at the accusation for two reasons. First, I naïvely

expected that a professional organization like H&R would not err. Second, as far as I understood, I had submitted only allowable expenses and declared all income.

Together, the fellow and I examined the return and found that H&R Block had mistakenly claimed the expenses twice. It was perfectly obvious that they were the ones who made the mistake, yet the fellow treated me as though I was a fraud. He was very rude, though I did not resist him in any way. He also fined me.

H&R Block refunded their fees in full and paid the fine, so I had my returns done for nothing. I would never agree to free tax services, however, for the abuse I received. I concluded the government fellow was a young upstart, learning his trade and trying to do what he assumed his superiors directed him to do.

His attitude was contemptible. I was made to feel dirty and helpless, though I was entirely innocent of intentional wrongdoing; I even had obvious proof for support. The effects of that experience remained with me for years to come.

Tax collectors have not changed from the days of pagan Rome. The world is the same. I have heard of several nightmarish stories where Revenue Canada was simply tyrannical, costing people their very lives. This has to go, as do so many things in this country and world. And go they will.

#### **Particle - Good and Evil in Amway**

I made no money in Amway, though I had reached Ruby Direct within a year by stockpiling my downline and myself with Queen cookware. We were constantly motivated to spend money on business development, promotions, and promotional materials.

In spite of it all, I really enjoyed being involved. I enjoyed the people, the friendliness and enthusiasm, the hopes and dreams, the quality of the products, and the fact that Rich DeVos wrote me a long letter when I had questions. I enjoyed learning some laws, principles, and secrets of life; I enjoyed the unscheduled lifestyle and the satisfaction and freedom one can experience in an independent business, as much as it was independent. There were still people to answer to, as always, such as the company and the distributors in both up and down directions.

After working at the Bay for John Behan, I thought this was akin to Heaven on earth. However, years later, with more understanding, I came to realize that for most recruits of Amway, it was a case of spinning one's wheels and getting nowhere financially. If you would like to know more about Amway and the experiences I and others had in it, read [Amway - Whence Cometh It?](#)

#### **Particle - A Stuffed Shirt**

When in Amway, one is encouraged, indeed urged, to view every person as a potential distributor. I began calling my old acquaintances, among whom were Marvin and Marietta Mielke, whom I met at MIT. We renewed our relationship and I sponsored them. (In the MIT days, I used to spend time at Marv's parents' home recording music. I recorded "Perfidia" so many times his mother was climbing walls, though Marv was quite patient about it.)

Marvin picked me and some Catholic nuns up one evening to listen to a rather intellectually sophisticated theologian speak at a large gathering. I did not understand a thing he was saying. Apparently many others did, because they often applauded. It seemed to me he was trying to



impress them. Marv, the intellectual type, was impressed, and on the way home, he enthusiastically asked me what I thought.

Being unusually forthright with Marvin and the others, I said, "I think he was a stuffed shirt." (I thought that if this fellow had worthwhile things to say, they should have been expressed in a way the common person could understand.) Marv was immediately exasperated, sputtering and railing at me.

Meanwhile, the nuns were sitting in the back, with folded hands, seemingly marveling, saying, "Very interesting... very interesting." I wondered what that was all about. I think I know now.

### **Particle - Deflated by a Dead Duck**

In the fall of 1971, I went duck hunting with my buddies - Gerry, Dave, and another fellow. Firing my shotgun, I dropped a duck. Retrieving it, I looked in its open eyes, and I was dismayed. I saw an innocent, helpless victim. "This is sport? I don't think so," I thought. I swore I would never go hunting for pleasure again.

I then did a foolish thing: I burned my license then and there, not considering that if the game warden came along and found me without it, but with a shotgun, I would be fined. I never hunted or killed for pleasure again. For food or some legitimate necessity, I would, but for pleasure, no. If that is pleasure, people should love giving others migraines.

### **Particle - 70's Homes Canada**

While in Amway in Winnipeg in 1972, I needed money, and Amway was not paying. Dennis Skuter, one of my distributors in Dauphin, had abandoned Amway and was making a good income selling mobile homes. He told me the company was looking for sales lot managers. I applied and was hired by Clancy Whitehead of 70's Homes Canada, a dealership out of Sudbury, Ontario, owned by Clancy, Bob Vail, and Terry Johnston.

While I waited for my promised position in Winnipeg where they planned to open a branch, they asked me to spend time in Brandon, about 100 miles away, until they found a manager there. The Brandon lot was at an abandoned garage site on #1 Highway a few miles west of the city.

Being broke, I wasn't able to get room and board accommodations. Besides, the job was too temporary, seeing they would soon fill the position of manager and send me on my way. I also had no car to drive back and forth to the sales lot (I sold my Isuzu because I couldn't keep up the payments), so they let me use a mobile home display unit, with a sleeping bag on the display bed. The sales units weren't hooked up to any utilities so I had no running water or washroom - just a porta-potty. I had to bum a ride with someone in the office to eat out, or ask them to pick something up for me.

Added to these inconveniences, Homes Canada placed their personnel strictly on commissions, so unless I sold something, there was no income. The problem was, Homes Canada had limited inventory, a quarter of what was normal, which meant less potential income. As well, being new in town on a derelict business site, the company seemed like a fly-by-night outfit, so there was little consumer traffic. Given the way Homes Canada was operating, I was wondering about it myself. It was a bit trying.

## **Particle - More Seeds Sown, Even by Hypocrites**

Clancy Whitehead hired a married saleswoman, Stella Paterson, who was a Pentecostal. She tried to witness to me about Jesus Christ. I had several discussions and arguments with her, throwing out my “superior knowledge” from Concept-Therapy. She had her pastor call and talk to me. I argued with him, too. When we were discussing the nature of God, he told me that God was everywhere. I asked him if God was in dog poop. All he could reply was that while God was everywhere, He could not be contained in anything. I didn’t understand that.

While they didn’t seem to get anywhere with me, though striving patiently, I think there were seeds sown. These seeds were sown despite the hypocrisy I perceived with Stella. On the one hand, she witnessed to me of the Lord, and on the other hand, she laughingly boasted to Clancy of how she had hoodwinked a prospective customer with some misleading information.

## **Particle - A Brazen Bad Boy**

My time in Brandon was short, and I earned no income. Rick Warram was hired from Homes Canada’s hometown, Sudbury, Ontario, to manage the Brandon branch. He was soon quite at home with the business and the owners with whom he had been acquainted, along with a young girl he fell for and slept with.

Upon my profession of faith later on, Rick became quite crude, mocking and insulting me, not so much nasty, as playfully insulting, perhaps something like what the sadistic comedian Don Rickles would do. It did not faze me, but I found him to be one of the more outspokenly scornful persons of religion and faith in Jesus Christ. I wonder what became of him. Last I heard, he was managing the head office branch for Bob Vail (who bought out his partners) and had relocated to Calgary.

## **Particle - Separation and Search**

While Rick was taking over Brandon, I was sent to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, because they had changed their minds about Winnipeg. Prince Albert was hundreds of miles away from where I was accustomed to living, and a city where I knew nobody. I was soon unexpectedly separated from family, friends, and familiar circumstances. It was a quiet circumstance, with plenty of time to think, meditate, read, have extended and interesting conversations, and search after God - a search gradually intensifying and becoming increasingly difficult to bear - like a pregnancy.

## **Particle - Future Saviors**

At first, I rented a room at a motel, but I soon took a two-bedroom basement suite at the home of Murray and Ila Garneau. Ila was Nazarene and professed faith in Christ. Murray, with a Catholic background, was antipathetic to religion and faith. He bristled at any introduction of spiritual and religious subjects. Regardless of their beliefs, these people would play a decisive role in my destiny.

## **Particle - A Taste of God’s Sovereignty**

I barely had enough money to buy a well-used black 1966 Chevy Impala at a used car sales lot on North Main in Winnipeg. Returning to Prince Albert from one of my trips to Dauphin or Winnipeg, I blew the engine near Sheho, Saskatchewan. This was a major blow to me. I was already over my head in debt, and now my poor excuse of a car was shot. What to do?

In this tiny village of no more than two hundred people, there happened to be a home business mechanic who rebuilt engines. He happened to have one exactly suited for my car that he had just overhauled. What are the chances of that? However, I would either have to take a bus to Prince Albert and return for the repaired car, or find lodging there until the job was done, if he was able to get on it right away. He was free to do so, and I took a room at the Sheho Hotel.

### **Particle - The Ritz in Sheho**

I would have found the hotel highly unacceptable, if it hadn't had the comical features of a seedy country dump one only sees in movies, something that should have been demolished decades before. It was an entertaining adventure. The two-story, perhaps eight-room, hotel must have dated back to the early 1900's, having seen the Great Depression and the droughts with dust storms and all.

The windows were old wooden ones that slid up and down, locking with a round metal handle in the middle. My window would not move because of age and because of the many times the divisions had been painted over. The paint was peeling from the ceiling and walls.

For lighting, I had one 100 Watt bulb with a bare socket, hanging over my bed from the center of the ceiling by a two-foot-long double-braided wire. The floor was worn out, with chipped linoleum on creaky wood. There was a little sink, with chipped enamel and yellow hard water stains. I think the water was discolored as well. A public washroom was down the hall. No TV. There may have been a radio.

When I lay in the bed, the center accommodating my bum reached halfway to the floor, somewhat like a hammock. The head of the bed was of ancient decorative metalwork, painted several times over the decades. I wondered what I would find under the covers, but though the place was ancient and the price cheap, it was surprisingly clean - no dirt, soiling, lice, bedbugs, cockroaches, or even dustballs - the temperature was comfortable, and it was peaceful and quiet. No parties next door or down the hall because... a party needs people!

### **Particle - Peace Instead of Turmoil**

This event could have been very difficult for me. There I was, in a troubled spiritual search, drowning in debt, stuck in a dilapidated hotel in the middle of nowhere, with a blown-out engine, and spending financially profitless time while my pay was strictly commissions from sales, which I had to generate entirely on my own, in an industry with which I was unfamiliar, with a company pioneering the territory.

Yet, somehow, God comforted me with the belief that He was in full control. Instead of great turmoil, I had a measure of peace. Neil and Cathy Wiebe had given me a book by Don Gossett, which helped assure me of God's sovereignty and care. Don spoke of how God was in control of everything, and that our main responsibility (and the best thing we could do in any circumstance, no matter how deplorable), was to trust and give thanks to God - which I did.

I was amazed at how well thanks and praise worked, though I was not a believer...yet. If it had not been for the book, the giving of thanks, and the recognition that God was in control of everything, I might have been overwhelmed by my circumstances. The effect was quite remarkable.

The mechanic had the car ready in two days, I wrote him a check for \$200, and I was on my way (I reflect on how he was willing to accept a check from a perfect stranger). The guy must have been

an amateur because the car thereafter burned oil, but it lasted me until the next car in the not-too-distant future, one I would be surprised to receive.

### Particle - Religion Rejects Reality

In my childhood, attending the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Dauphin, I knew Shirley Zabiaka, eldest daughter of Bill Zabiaka. We were about the same age. Her mother was very religious, particularly after having lost a child to illness.

On one of my trips between Prince Albert and Dauphin during a time I was without a car, I met up with Shirley on a Greyhound bus. She had become a nun and lived in a convent. We got to talking about spiritual matters. She was very religious, with affected piety; she wouldn't contract her verbs and made motions with her head and hands as would the pope, speaking and acting as she would imagine a saint or angel to speak.

Shirley was rather persuasive. She seemed quite happy and fulfilled in her life as a nun. I argued against Catholicism, and she argued for. We were not offended with each other, but she certainly took the high road, matronizing me as though I was this poor lost soul and she possessed the wisdom of the ages.

Well, I *was* a poor lost soul, and I didn't mind if she knew it, but she *didn't* have the wisdom of the ages, and I knew she didn't, but she wasn't prepared to acknowledge it. Indeed, it seemed she hardly knew her spiritual condition.

Years later, Shirley died of physical and mental exhaustion and distress in the convent. She was in her late forties or early fifties, I believe.

### Particle - My Offense against Frank Hickey

Even while I was in a spiritual search, I was still very capable of the worst of sins and the "best" of sins. I recall a simple, friendly, enthusiastic, hard-working couple who wished to buy a mobile home (the fellow's name was Sonny). They did not have a down payment to qualify for financing. Terry Johnston urged me to inflate the selling price, fake receiving a down payment, pretend that their parents had given it to them, and apply for the loan.

Homes Canada worked with Frank Hickey, the loans manager for the Bank of Nova Scotia. He questioned the transaction, being very skeptical. Terry Johnston coached me to bluster my way, which I did, railing on Frank, who was consequently perplexed and insulted, though confounded, it seems, not knowing for sure whether I was lying or speaking the truth and angry that he was not accepting my word. We got the loan, we were guilty of fraud, and I earned an enemy in the financial world.

On the other hand, Sonny and his wife were super happy to have their very own home, though modest, one they could not have hoped to have otherwise.

I was happy for the new home owners and hoped they would never default on their loan.

And I would remember this offence against Frank.

### Particle - Sometimes, Lightning Does Strike Twice at Once

A customer came purchasing a mobile home. He told me that his education in forestry was so high that only one or two others in the world had it. Soon after beginning to work in the forest, however, he fell mysteriously ill. After extensive medical investigation, it was discovered that he had an extremely rare allergy. This allergy was specific to a common coniferous species of tree, which is what most forests are made of, at least in Canada. Consequently, he was forced to discontinue his career, which had barely begun.

So, lightning **does** strike in the same place twice, not often maybe, but it does.

#### Particle - **A Hippie Skeptic**

Murray and Ila sent their nephew, Robert Garneau, to me for a job. I got him building steps for the show homes and doing other odd jobs. Robert was a hippie; he had the language, the long hair, smoked pot, drank, swore, and lived loose in general. He and I had several lively discussions on spiritual and philosophical matters. We would agree and disagree. He was quite cynical of anything to do with religion. Why was I talking to him about religion when I didn't really believe myself, except that I was searching for answers?

I wonder what became of him. I've known others much like him who didn't live long.

#### Particle - **Tricks of the Trade**

I met Lawrence Hipkiss in Prince Albert. Lawrence, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, was a smoker (many AA members seemed to be at that time and maybe are today). He sold Filter Queen vacuum cleaners and was very good at it. He took me on a demo. This demo had a successful close, which was not unusual because, according to him, his average was eight or nine out of ten. He was an expert, and his demo was wonderful to watch, though I really didn't have the knowledge to fully appreciate what he was doing. He had them almost literally eating out of his hand. I was amazed.

I later came to realize some of the tricks of the trade, which were impressive, but misleading. For example, sales people were trained to suck up a steel ball bearing with the open end of the hose, a ball not much smaller in diameter than the thickness of the hose, which the machine would suck up with ease. One tends to think it would be hard to do because of the ball's size and weight, but the large surface area of the bearing actually makes it easy. Uninformed observers, however, assume the machine has great suction.

The Filter Queen's design was used to dramatize the event. It had a round canister collecting the contents. The hose enters its side and directs the contents sideways in a continuing circular motion until they come to rest on the bottom. One could easily hear the sound of the bearing revolving along the wall of the canister. Before the bearing came to rest, Lawrence opened the canister as the couple eagerly leaned forward to see.

They marveled, not realizing that if he had done that with much lighter and smaller particles, like salt or sugar, it would not have been nearly so impressive. Their Electrolux could have done just as well or better in sucking up a ball bearing that size, had they thought to try. It could have done just as well if it was **years** old.

While other brands were touted to be so great, Electrolux was truly one of the best, if not the best at the time and for decades after. The people at this demo had purchased an Electrolux system only months before Lawrence and I visited them with Filter Queen. By the time he was through

with them, they were trading their machine for a fraction of what they paid, for something that did not work as well.

I'm not saying that Lawrence deliberately tried to deceive them. I don't know. I do know that I have seen many demonstrations of various products in homes, at fairs, and at exhibitions. The demonstrators are practiced in their presentation, which is often not a fair presentation of the reality. The buyer is to beware, indeed (see [Violence is Rampant on the Earth](#)). I have spent thousands as a sucker, not realizing the subtle power of trained, cunning sales personnel.

Think about it - what match is the average homebuyer in negotiation with a realtor salesperson who is trained to handle potential buyers and sells homes as a profession? Or how many know how to deal on a vehicle with a professional salesperson? It would pay for the average buyer to hire a purchaser to do the job and give him or her a commission.

### **Particle - First Full Read of the Bible**

Passing through Dauphin in my travels, searching and full of questions, I went to see our parish priest, the "Very Reverend" Monsignor Gregory Oucharyk. He gave me a Douay Bible, which I proceeded to read from cover to cover, Apocrypha and all. I read every word, including the statistical, constructional, and genealogical portions of Leviticus, Numbers, and Chronicles, the details of which can bore many to death, if they ever bother to read them.

I didn't want to miss a thing, likely hoping the Bible had some kind of mystical power to effect a change in me. By the end of Revelation, the last book, however, I was not a whit wiser or changed. I understood nothing at all. I couldn't even grasp that Jesus Christ was the central figure of the entire Bible.

### **Particle - Crying Out to God**

During that period in 1972, I began to pray at the office and at home. Night after night, I knelt by my bed and cried out to God in quiet desperation. "If You are there, God, if I can talk to You, if You are willing to show Yourself, please, please do." The emptiness within and dissatisfaction with the things of this world grew so intense, I came to feel that unless God answered, I had no reason to go on living.

Socially, I was a misfit, a loser, a square peg trying to fit a round hole. I recall going out with my neighbor, Brian Toews, and his girlfriends, Janice and Isabel, and being completely out of synch with them. They were light and frivolous, enjoying themselves, and I was miserable and lonely.

### **Particle - The Light that Blinds**

I called Abe Friesen, an independent plumber, to service Homes Canada's furnaces in the mobile homes. He ended up spending hours talking to me about God and the Bible. I gave him many an argument, as I did with all those who tried to reason with me against my "enlightened" convictions.

Today, New Agers share the same millennia-old concepts of self-godhood, beginning with Adam and Eve, and think they have something new and superior. I was there, and New Agers simply do not believe me when I tell them so. That is how I was with others, and that is how it is for all those who think they have been enlightened by most philosophies but particularly this one. Everybody likes to think they have power to do the impossible and don't need God. They are so wrong.

## Particle - What is a Christian?

I also had a roommate, Warren Potts from Regina, who was the branch manager for the TCC Finance company. We had several talks on spiritual matters, but he was not interested. He believed he was a Christian because he was a patriotic Canadian who believed in democracy and the Saskatchewan Roughriders. I marveled at the definitions people had of the term "Christian." But I was now on the verge of finding out the true meaning....

## Particle - Jesus Christ Makes an Appearance

That year of 1972, in my search for life's meaning and purpose, I decided to fast for **three days and three nights**, without food or water, searching after God. I had spent several nights over months struggling at my bedside, begging for God to show Himself. I was empty, lonely, desperate, and I contemplated suicide. I could see no worthwhile purpose in my life. Very soon after my fast, I had a dream, likely on **July 10, 1972**.

The dream began with a voice that cried out, *"The Indians are coming! The Indians are coming! They are raiding our gardens! Hurry up, everybody! Get your guns! The Indians are coming!"* It seemed I was one of the servants in a great household or community of some kind. I headed to the back of the house and into a porch where the armaments were supposed to be. I looked on the walls and saw guns and bows hanging, but they were all broken and useless.

The voice then said to me, *"Never mind, then. Just go out and see what they are doing."* I went out, and as I stepped out the back door, I walked into a beautifully verdant and fruitful garden, with bountiful trees amidst low shrubs and plants full of fruit.

There I saw American natives, dressed as they and we dress today. They were clean, respectable, and full of peace and joy. They were harvesting fruits and vegetables. The women were gathering into their baskets and aprons, and the men into baskets. Plainly, they were **anything but** a threat.

As I watched them, I partially understood their spirits, and I knew what was happening. They were gathering, yes, but it was **their** garden, not ours. And they weren't doing so for themselves, but for us. They weren't taking; they were giving, willingly, joyfully, and thankfully.

I walked into the garden, through it, and past these super friendly people. Arriving on the other side, I found myself on city streets, with buildings round about. It seemed that I was walking south in Calgary, past what seemed to be the McMahon Stadium on my right. Then I approached the edge of what was at once the block, the neighborhood, the city, and the earth.

Suddenly, everything went very still and silent. Not a thing could be heard, felt, or seen moving. There were people to my left and behind me. We were all facing in one direction, lined up along this edge. Something was happening.

As I looked ahead, out on the horizon, I saw a great white building on the right of my viewpoint. It was rectangular in shape, and it seemed to be three or four stories high, yet thousands of stories high. It had windows all over it, each window covered with a cloud. It had a large entrance, also covered with cloud. I could not see the bottom of this building, which was concealed by the

horizon. It began to move slowly and very smoothly leftward in my view. The smoothness seemed like that of a great ship or barge on glass-smooth waters.

When it came to be directly in the middle of my “screen,” it stopped. The clouds covering the entrance dispersed to reveal a large, spacious entry without doors, with several wide steps up to it, something like what one sees with great governmental buildings. The building appeared dark inside.

On each side of the entrance stood a giant man, armed with spear or javelin, standing at ease, feet astride, with weapon arm stretched out to the side, holding the spear upright. These men seemed to be twelve to sixteen feet tall, and they were glorious. I judged them to be angels guarding the entrance.

Then a red path mysteriously formed on the floor inside the building, proceeding to the entrance and the stairs. It seemed like a flowing red carpet, wide enough for two persons to walk side by side on it. Two men appeared, walking on the carpet as it formed. It came down the stairs, and they came down the stairs. They walked slowly and steadily, relaxed, with glory and dignity. The path was approaching us, and they walked toward us on the path.

All people stood, transfixed, not knowing what was happening. As the two men approached us, I suddenly realized that one was none other than Jesus Christ! I became very afraid, because I also realized that this was what I understood to be the “Second Coming,” Jesus Christ returning to earth to judge and reign.

Why was I afraid? I was born and indoctrinated as a Catholic. The Catholic Church teaches that if one has a mortal (serious) sin on his soul and dies in that state, or if Jesus Christ comes while one is in that state, the soul goes to hell to burn forever in horrible torment. Ten trillion years later, there is no parole; it is just beginning. Was there not good reason to fear, seeing I knew I was not right with God and it was too late to change?

I had never ever been so afraid before.

Just ahead of me, and a little to my right, about ten or fifteen feet away, two men stood with their backs to me, apparently farmers, looking at what was unfolding before their eyes. One said to the other, “What’s going on here?” I knew what was going on, realizing that it was indeed Jesus Christ and the end of the world. I did not say it, but I thought to say to these men, “What the hell is the matter with you?! Don’t you know what’s going on? It’s the Second Coming of Christ, that’s what’s going on!” I was overcome with fear and desperation.

As the two men on the red path drew nearer, Jesus being on the right, and the other man on His left, I **saw His face**. What a face! I had never before, or have I since, seen anything like it. Plainly, there is nothing like it. He was Love, Wisdom, Peace, Power, Beauty, Perfection, and Authority Incarnate. He was Lord not by position or title only, but by His very nature.

His face was distinctly Jewish, yes, Jewish, yet it was universal. Seeing His face, I could readily understand the meaning, value, and importance of the Second Commandment: **“You shall not make to yourselves any graven image or likeness of anything....”** I perceived that any picture or statue one might make to portray His face would not only misrepresent Him or fall short of the true, it would be unavoidably blasphemous. It would be a product of man’s imagination, which is at enmity with God, as the Bible declares. Any pictures or statues I have seen of Jesus, no matter how



skilled the artist, are abominable compared to what I saw. They are an outright lie, born out of vain and foolish notions.

As He momentarily looked at me, I noted there was no condemnation in His face at all towards me, despite the way I was. My fear was because of my unbelief and sin, and because of my lack of understanding. Plainly, He was not there to condemn or punish. Yet, in the light of His character, I was found to be vile. I felt so dirty, so corrupt, entirely unworthy of Him and the man with Him.

Should I fall on my knees? I found that very difficult, being proud. Should I fall prostrate? That was even more difficult. I also knew that if I did fall before Him in body, I would not be doing so in heart. I knew that my corruption was unacceptable in His sight, and my trying to honor Him was vain and impossible by my very nature. I dropped to my knees, groveling in mud, it seemed, though there was no mud except for perhaps me. I was doomed, and I knew it.

Jesus was dressed in robes and all royal attire. He had a neat beard, not short, not long, and His hair was not long, as usually depicted. He was taller than the man with Him. The man with him was also distinctly Jewish, but not universal as was Jesus. He had the same kind of hair and beard, and he too was dressed in royal clothing. I did not know who the man was. As he walked, he kept focused on Jesus' face. He was glowing with admiration. The time would come when I would understand more of this dream and what I saw in that man's face.

The man tenderly held the Lord's left hand in front of him at waist level. They two together also seemed to be carrying a cushion before them with something on it, but I do not recall seeing or knowing what it was. While Jesus looked ahead at the people, the man seldom did - he would take the occasional glance, but mostly his gaze was fixed on the Lord's face. Jesus sometimes raised His right hand and acknowledged the rare person in the crowd. He did not acknowledge the two farmers, and He did not acknowledge me. I was condemned, not by Him, but in myself.

As the two men drew near, the path continued without stopping and turned to their right (my left) along the front of the crowd. They continued walking past the crowd. The moment they had turned to their right, the great white building, which had remained in the background, still in the middle of my view, began to move in the same direction as the men, to my left. It moved at the same slow, steady, smooth pace.

The dream ended, and I awoke with my sleep shirt soaked with perspiration. I was absolutely terrified, though slightly relieved that it was but a dream, and not the reality. Yet it was so real that when I awoke, I wondered if it was not a revelation of what was absolutely established to take place, with no hope of change.

The effect of that dream, though terrifying, was that I would try my utmost to change my life and seek after God to be accepted of Him, whatever that would take. I shared this dream with many, who marveled at it.

Who was the man walking at the left hand of the Lord? Years later, I would know.

#### Particle - **The Indians' Peace**

For a week or two after that dream, I was greatly troubled, and I didn't know what to do. I found myself pondering how the dream had begun - with the Indians and how happy and at peace they were. I wondered what they had to do with the Second Coming. I then received another dream, a word dream only. A voice posed this question to me: *"Victor, why do you think those*

*Indians had such peaceful faces?"* Suddenly, I knew, yet the voice gave me the answer:  
*"Because they had spiritual, not physical, food."*

#### Particle - Impossible to Do and Be Good

After these dreams, I set out to eliminate all vices and practice all virtues. In my attempt to live a good life, one I thought I needed to live to be acceptable to God, I soon learned how impossible that is. If a man can catch the wind in his fists, he can live a righteous life. I became despondent, feeling so helpless. I couldn't understand why it was so hard to be good. After all, wasn't it the good thing to do?

#### Particle - "You'll Have the Life"

I set out to try to change my life and rid myself of my sins, to make myself pleasing and acceptable to God, but I soon realized the impossibility of such an undertaking. My vices had me bound, and there was nothing I could do about them. I was about to quit altogether after weeks or months of trying and failing, when I had a third dream, in which I was encouraged to go on.

In this dream, I was in a dark basement at the bottom of a long set of stairs. There was an open door at the top, with light shining in. I was squatting on the floor, naked, and defecating (purging myself, as I later understood). I heard a voice from the doorway saying, *"For one and a quarter, you have had the word; for one forty-five, you will have the life* (or 'light,' I don't recall which)."

I took it to mean that I was to go on, that I was almost there. In that persisting, I would reach the desired goal. The dream encouraged me to continue seeking after God and striving to be good, as impossible a task as it seemed.

Meanwhile, I was subject in both mind and body to all the mundane and worldly events and influences around me....

#### Particle - Pork and Parasites

Adam Hladysh worked a short time as a salesman for me at Homes Canada. Through him, I met Gary Fry, a friendly fellow who worked in the Burns meat processing plant. Gary told me that there were times when they had to reject as many as one in three swine carcasses because of their great parasitic content. That fact stuck with me, though I didn't do much about it for some time. I would need a little coaxing from behind.

#### Particle - A Bitter Man

Near the end of 1972, Ron Cole came with his wife Karen to Prince Albert, looking for a job, and I hired him. His wife was a Mennonite, cheery and patient. It seems he had had some kind of Christian conversion and was received into the Mennonite community. He had attended their Bible school, where he was hurt emotionally. He became very bitter and nasty.

I tried reasoning with him, though I myself was not a Christian at the time, but he was not to be reached, so cynical and bitter he was. He didn't succeed with us and soon left. He wished to pursue training as a social worker.

### Particle - A Horse behind the Cart

A social worker! Why is it that social workers need so much work done on themselves? How is it people presume to free prisoners, being prisoners themselves? Is it because they think they will find freedom by working to free others? Or do they refuse to admit their wrong and be corrected, and decide to prove themselves right after all? A little like consultants who, failing in their practical occupations, decide to consult others in those same occupations. Or like people who, not coping in the world themselves, go to a Bible school, seminary, monastery, or convent to escape the world, then presume to advise others on coping in the world.

### Particle - Twenty-Seven Years of Darkness about to End

I didn't realize what was happening to me, and I had no idea what was coming. My life was about to change dramatically in a way I didn't expect.

## *The Second Dimension*

### THE FEAST OF PASSOVER

#### Particle - Truth and Scriptures Shared

In February of 1973, Homes Canada hired George Lynn, a tradesman in his early sixties, with a Scottish accent, to service their mobile homes. Prince Albert was his first assignment. When he arrived, he called me at home.

I still remember the day I went to George's motel room to greet him. As I walked by the window to his door, the curtains were open and I saw an elderly man sitting in a chair, doing nothing. He wasn't watching TV, and he wasn't reading anything. He just sat there. That struck me as unusual. He seemed to have something I was seeking. Peace? Contentment?

It was not long before I found out that George was familiar with the Bible and quite eager to discuss its contents. Before the evening was done, he was talking to me about God and Jesus Christ. In the following days, when he discovered I was Catholic, he tried to convince me of how corrupt the Roman Catholic Church was. He related some of the specific gross and indecent sins prevalent in her of which he had heard. He only succeeded, however, in making me angry - I had no idea the Catholic Church was guilty of such crimes, and I couldn't believe it. I thought this to be nothing more than ignorant and bitter Protestant propaganda.

Given wisdom by God, he steered away from criticizing the Catholic Church and delved into Scripture, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ and His love and sacrifice for me. He told me how I needed to receive and submit to Jesus Christ as Lord of my life. He made it clear there was nothing I could do to save myself - I needed to be born again, and I needed the Almighty and Only Savior to do the job. He shared hundreds of Scriptures with me for hours each day. I recall many verses from the apostle Paul's epistles:

**“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16 KJV).**

**“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9 KJV).**

**“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36 KJV).**

“You don’t want to be there, Vic,” George said.

**“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23 KJV).**

**“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23 KJV).**

To encourage me to believe the veracity and authority of Scripture, George shared with me the words the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

**“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV).**

The Scriptures that stood out to me the most, and seemed to be the clinchers for me, were:

**“But what says it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 10:8-11 KJV).**

Particle - **Pride**

After a few days without apparent success with me, George said, “I have been praying for you, Vic. I’ve been asking the Lord what is holding you back from receiving Him, and I believe He has answered me. Do you know what it is?”

As he was about to say it, I said it for him, “Yes, I do know - it’s pride.”

“Yes,” he said.

I was too proud to humble myself and confess Jesus as Lord. It was embarrassing to me.

Particle - **Turning to Jesus Christ**

After seven evenings, each with hours of instruction, I began to believe that Jesus Christ was **The Answer** for me. I knew I was not right with God, I was not able to make myself right with Him, and

I wanted so much to **be** right with Him. Here George told me exactly how it was possible, and the only way possible.

Finally, somewhat sheepishly, I said, “George, can we pray?” There I was, a proud, stuffy, stogie-sucking salesman, at a crossroad of life. He was out of his chair and on his knees in a flash, and I got down on mine.

Almost instantly, I was surprised. I didn’t know what to say or how to pray. I thought if anyone knew how to pray, it would be a Catholic! I was silent, stumped. It didn’t even occur to me to pray an “Our Father” or a “Hail Mary.”

“Speak respectfully to God as you would to a loving Father, a respected person,” George quietly advised. “Tell Him your thoughts and what you want.”

Awkwardly, yet desperately and sincerely, I asked Jesus Christ to forgive me for my sins and to take over my life, which I confessed I could not manage or change on my own. George also prayed, he shared some Scriptures with me to assure me God had heard my prayer, and we rose from the floor. I did not feel, hear, or see anything. A little disappointed, yet somehow at peace, I went home.

#### Particle - **God Is Real!**

In the days to follow, changes occurred in me over which I had no control and for which I could take no credit whatsoever. The vices and bad habits I had tried and failed to overcome began to be removed from me. It was like chains had turned to cooked noodles - all I had to do was clean them off.

I suddenly found myself with new interests and desires, a take on life and joy and peace I had never known. In the days following, I had satisfaction, fulfillment, direction, and purpose. My load of guilt was lifted. At 27, I had something I could call **life** for the first time! Wow!

A wonder - the Bible became a new book to me! As I said earlier, I had read it through before from cover to cover - every word - and understood absolutely nothing. Now I was amazed at what I found! It was alive and full of meaning. God was real! I had finally found Him! More accurately, He had finally revealed Himself to me!

#### Particle - **Evidence of Change while Faith Tested**

Something startled me within days after this happening. Lloyd Johnson, a rough and tumble truck driver from Homes Canada, drove into the lot with a new home. As he proceeded to hastily back it into its parking spot, he dinged an adjacent home, which ruined a corner and some panels on both homes. I had very little inventory for sale, and I was suddenly exasperated because it could take weeks to order parts and repair the homes before they were saleable.

I lost it and used the Lord’s Name to curse. I was shocked. What’s this? I thought I had changed! Hadn’t I? I thought I could never do anything like that again. Why had I done it? How?

“George, what about this? How do you explain it? Am I changed or not?” With George’s counsel, I realized that not very long before, I was accustomed to using the Lord’s Name in vain without guilt or remorse. Now, for the first time, it bothered me terribly. My shock and remorse were sure

indications that something **had** changed after all. By God's grace, and not by any virtue of my own (I know and assure you), I have never used His Name in that manner again.

#### Particle - **A Great Sinner**

Let me be quite candid so that you may appreciate what kind of change occurred in my life at that time. As a Catholic, I had been an altar boy, president of the youth club, and soloist in the choir. I took communion, prayed the rosary, and attended a minor seminary for a year. At the same time, I was a great fool, liar, thief, cheat, drunk, fraud, chintz, pervert, coward, traitor, hypocrite, fornicator, adulterer, masturbator, blasphemer, idolater, drunkard, glutton, smoker, and more. I was self-destruction on two legs frantically looking for a place to happen.

I occasionally went to confession and continually sinned. I did not do so cynically, but with guilt, helplessness, frustration, and fear. I was smiles, jokes, and laughter on the outside, but troubled within because in constant sin and guilt. Since puberty I had masturbated, and when I earnestly tried to quit, I found myself a slave to it, unable to stop. From all these things God graciously delivered me, and for them all He has forgiven me.

#### Particle - **Much More to It This Time**

This is one of the first things my family and friends said to me about my conversion to Christ: "You were in Amway and it wasn't long before you gave it up. Then you got into Concept-Therapy, got all fired up, and soon you forgot about that. You've always got some wacky idea. This is just another fad. Those didn't last and neither will this."

I thought: "No, whereas I was the one doing those things in the past, this time something happened to me, and I don't ever want to lose it or give it up!"

#### Particle - **My Family Reacts**

When the Lord delivered me of my sins and took over my life, turning it right side up, division came between me and my family, friends, and associates. The Catholic parish priest, and all Catholics I knew and spoke to, condemned what had happened to me. My family's attitude drastically changed toward me. They were very displeased. You will see how my sister threw me out of her house, and much of my family shunned me.

Even though I, as a Catholic, was full of all the evils mentioned above (and many were aware of these things), nobody in my family or in the Catholic Church had a problem with my vices and lifestyle. Truly, I was one of them, likely the worst of all. But the moment I confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and was delivered of those vile sins, vices, and lifestyle, I was condemned as a traitor, an ignorant dupe of some zealous non-Catholic, "Bible-thumping" zealots.

#### Particle - **My First Eviction for the Faith**

When I tried to talk to the Dauphin parish priest, Gregory Oucharyk, about the Bible, the Lord, and how He made such a difference in my life, all he could do was pull rank on me. "It's impossible to understand the Bible unless you have been reading it for at least three years," he said. "Besides, the Holy Roman Apostolic Catholic Church is the first, the largest, oldest, and only true Church, the Mother Church. It is the one Jesus Christ founded, starting with Peter."

I differed with him on many points until he arose from his desk, tried in his spiritual way to be friendly (yet visibly upset), took my hand as if to shake it, grabbed it firmly, and physically “guided” me to the door. Out I was. It was a peculiar move I often thought about later. Nobody would be able to say he kicked me out. He could say he simply shook my hand and kindly dismissed me.

### **Particle - Testifying to the Bill Hafichuk Family**

Uncle Bill Hafichuk was my father’s older brother. I shared the Gospel with his youngest son, Ronald. I gave him a Chick Publications tract, which he gave to his father, who took it to the priest, Gregory Oucharyk, who said it was garbage. Uncle Bill readily believed him and tossed the tract away. This was the general attitude and stance of the family. In later years, I had heard that Ron was quite scornful of faith in Christ.

### **Particle - My Father Mocks**

At a social gathering at the 11<sup>th</sup> Ave Ukrainian Catholic Hall in Dauphin, I shared the Gospel with Gordon Toomey, my cousin Theresa Hafichuk’s husband. He kept looking past me and smiling. I looked back to see my father playfully jesting and mocking. Gordon shyly rejected what I was sharing.

Was that a wise decision? Gord Toomey later became an alcoholic, and he and Theresa divorced. People think they can ignore or reject the fact that Jesus Christ died for their sins and that they are not permitted to live in them any longer. Like it or not, He calls them into account. Not responding, they suffer, often big time. Gordon is an example of many I have known.

### **Particle - Choosing the Path of Tragedy**

I very much appreciated Aunt Lucy, one of my mother’s eleven sisters, and I had some admiration for her husband, Ernie Mouck, who was handsome and rather “cool.” Their children, my cousins, Butch and Arleigh, were cute kids, though I did not get to see them much; we were close to a generation apart, and they lived miles away.

It was a bit of a shock to me when my father boisterously reported Ernie declaring that if anyone ever came to his house to “talk religion,” he would literally throw them out. I supposed that my father received “immoral support,” which helped justify his own opposition to me. He likely thought I would be more likely to reconsider my position, seeing Ernie felt that way about “people like me.”

The eventual tragedies that came to Ernie Mouck’s house were more than many households have had to bear. In the years to come, it was reported that his firstborn, Gerald “Butch,” became an alcoholic in his early teens (or earlier). Thankfully, I understand that he was eventually able to not only control his addiction, but also do well - occupationally, and perhaps maritally and socially as well.

I was told their daughter, Arleigh, was severely injured in her later teens in an automobile collision. Thankfully, she was also able to overcome and do well. These are not accidental tragedies or events without cause, however. Those who refuse truth and God suffer the consequences and bring them on their entire house.

Sadly, there would be even more and worse to come.

## **Particle - Sweet Cy Sensible and Sympathetic**

Cy Puls (Sweet Cy) once told me he rebuked my father for his stance against me, telling him he ought to be thankful I was living an upright and moral life, when I could have turned out so differently. Dad had been complaining to him about how I had turned my back on him and his church, and how he couldn't reason with me.

“What?! Would you rather he was an alcoholic or drug addict?” Cy replied in his characteristically aggressive manner. “How about a drug pusher or some criminal behind bars? You have nothing to complain about, Nick! He's healthy, and he's behaving himself!”

Years before, Mr. Puls had a child with whom he had problems, she being notoriously, openly promiscuous in her youth. He also had a son-in-law, Pete Munson, who was a raging alcoholic. Sweet Cy had a perspective of appreciation, relatively speaking. Did my father ever tell me of Cy's comments? Of course not - it wouldn't have served his ends!

## **Particle - That's Gratitude for You**

Backing up several months, while Homes Canada was waiting for inventory to send up to my empty lot in Prince Albert, Terry Johnston asked me to come to his Esterhazy branch and help with an open house, which I did. I stayed with him and his wife Julie for a week or so.

I met some people there and was invited to a party. Terry lent me his car. I got drunk and sideswiped it against something, leaving a small bit of damage. When Terry asked about it, I lied, saying I had no idea how it happened.

Now it was time for me to fess up. I called Terry and told him I had damaged his car the summer before. Bob Vail later told me that when Terry got off the phone, he exploded with a volley of expletives, furious at having been “had.” Bob was entertained and had a good laugh about it. I was surprised to hear it because, relatively speaking, Terry had acted rather calmly when I confessed to him by phone. He never did say anything more to me, good or bad.

## **Particle - Boot Number Two**

How I wished for my family to experience my newfound life! One day, I approached my sister and her husband, Ron, whom I appreciated very much, and spoke to them about turning to the Lord. We spoke of several matters - the Catholic Church and the Bible - but when I tried to persuade them to quit smoking, to my surprise, Ron began to cry. I would have pursued why, but Barbara immediately exclaimed, “See what you've done?!” and expelled me from her house, along with Cathie, my brother Archie's wife, who was with me. Ron didn't say a word.

I so wanted to share with them the great treasure I had found. I was taken aback that they found a problem with my deliverance. “You know what, Victor?” my sister sarcastically declared one day, “I don't like the ‘new you’!”

I lost all that I had, but I was quite willing to have it that way for the fulfillment I enjoyed, for the first time in my life. My gains far outweighed my losses.

## **Particle - “A Little Jesus”**



Uncle Don Hafichuk also took offence at my change of life. “You think you’re a little Jesus or something!” he scornfully blurted. In later years, I realized that a genuine Christian is exactly that - “a little Jesus,” born of Him, in the process of being transformed into His image, even as the Bible declares:

**“Do not lie to one another, for you have put off the old self with its habits and have put on the new self. This is the new being which God, its Creator, is constantly renewing in His own image, in order to bring you to a full knowledge of Himself” (Colossians 3:9-10 GNB).**

#### Particle - **Catholic Sinner Preferable to Non-Catholic Saint**

As long as I was Catholic, my sins were not an issue, but when my sins were cleaned up in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, **outside of the Catholic Church**, suddenly I was a heretic, and as a leper to them. “Why aren’t they thankful?” I wondered.

The truth is that if I had been delivered within the Catholic Church (if that is possible), they would not have appreciated it any more, although they would not have been “shown up” by any other denomination, which they consider to be in darkness.

#### Particle - **A Striking Word from God**

Not all members of my family were negative about my conversion to Christ. My mother’s sister, Delores Molnar, and her husband, Fred, were overjoyed at the news. Delores had been converted to Christ several years earlier and suffered much contempt from the rest of the family for it. She and Fred attended evangelical churches (Fred didn’t seem to have quite the same interest or commitment). When hearing of my conversion to Christ, Aunt Delores said, *“Victor is the sacrificial lamb for the family.”*

Those words seemed prophetic and stayed with me. I suspected they were true, but I had little, if any, understanding of what they meant or what the implications would be. In future, Delores would be speaking other words of great import to me.

You will recall my telling you of the wrestling match with Uncle Fred at a celebration years before. Was Aunt Delores a believer back then? I don’t remember. If she wasn’t, things had changed for them since that time. (There is more to come with Fred and Delores.)

#### Particle - **A Messenger Decades in the Preparation**

Here is another interesting coincidence: Consider that just before we met, George Lynn was working at Northwest Mobile Homes in Fort Macleod, Alberta, a town several hundred miles away from where I was. George was laid off due to a plant closure, and he was consequently hired by Homes Canada in Calgary as a serviceman.

George’s first stop of Homes Canada sales lots was mine, only a few miles from Weldon, where he had lived in his youth. George hadn’t been there for several decades, but he knew old friends there who professed faith in Christ - the Nelsons.

Upon our meeting and my repentance, George felt I needed Christian company to whom he could entrust his new convert. He said to me, “You need a Bible-believing church now.” He introduced

me to the people he had known, who were attending the Alliance Church, and they undertook to befriend a babe in Christ.

How is it George was sent decades later to his former home turf where he could talk to me about the Gospel and introduce me to companions when I needed them? God had been arranging people and circumstances for my sake decades earlier; George Lynn was His chosen messenger, and Prince Albert His chosen tryst, where He first appeared to me by dream.

(By the way, after traveling far and wide for years, it so happens we now live but a fifteen-minute drive away from Fort Macleod, where George Lynn had been working just before we met.)

#### Particle - **Christian Contacts and Companions**

I remember people from the Alliance Church, my first non-Catholic church home. They were Les and Delores Nelson (my first Christian friends next to George), Abe Friesen (who had tried to speak to me of God and the Bible previously at my office), Tim and Verna Friesen, Nelson and Cylvia Reimer, Dale and Peggy Gordon, Dick and Donna Friesen, Ernest Regier (the pastor), Dr. Lorne Rabuka, Lyle Shapansky, Hilda Pirie, and a few others who shared their lives to encourage me along my spiritual path.

#### Particle - **Still a Catholic**

Hilda Pirie was quite receptive and zealous. She tried to witness to everyone, including boarders she kept in her big house to make ends meet. One day she made some remarks to me about the Catholic Church and how nuns were reported to have babies by priests and dispose of those babies in various ways when born.

I got angry with her, asking her if she knew beyond any doubt that those things were true. She admitted that she didn't have undeniable true knowledge in what she was saying. When I pressed and rebuked her, she confessed her knowledge was hearsay and apologized.

I was still quite defensive of the Catholic Church. In other words, at that point, though I was a convert to Christ, I was still Catholic, or I was at least attached in some significant way.

#### Particle - **Advised to Leave the Catholic Church**

The pastor, Ernest Regier, labored patiently with me after I believed, visiting me at my office, especially when I was struggling with Catholicism. He was highly diplomatic about it, and I got somewhat impatient with him, expecting him to speak up if he had something to say. He told me that a church might get large and old, and from it would spring up something new, leaving the old behind (to die, one would presume). Discreetly, he was speaking of the wisdom, necessity, and validity of my leaving the Catholic Church and not returning to it.

#### Particle - **Full-Time Christian Companion Provided**

Tim Friesen was a young married man fresh out of Bible school from Nipawin, Saskatchewan. He and his wife began attending the Alliance Church and I hired him as a salesman. In the following days, he shared much with me in the office and, once or twice, he and Verna invited me to their home for dinner.

## Particle - **The Simplicity of the Alliance Church**

I recall my first impressions as a Catholic in an evangelical church building. I was taken aback by its stark atmosphere.

In the Ukrainian Catholic, Byzantine church, the only one to which I had ever belonged, every square inch of the multi-domed ceiling and ornate walls was intricately painted, accompanied with pictures and statues of God, Jesus, the apostles, saints, and angels, as well as crucifixes, designs, candles, a large chandelier, and other objects.

There were also the ceremony and ritual, the bell ringing, making the sign of the cross, constant kneeling, sitting, and standing during services, chanting, parading around the altar, and singing.

There was the all-important altar and all the paraphernalia - fancy cloth coverings, candlestick holders, a little model church building on the altar, complete with door and key for "the host" (the golden chalice with or without its contents of bread and wine administered in the Mass). "What is a church without an altar?" I wondered.

The priest wore ornate vestments, and all was formal and precisely orchestrated. He sang the words of the Mass and was often accompanied by anywhere from two to six altar boys, dressed in their ornate vestments, answering scripted and timely words. Often there was a "dyak," a man who would answer the priest throughout the ceremony.

All I saw at the Alliance were bare white walls and plain wooden cathedral ceiling, plain pews, and a simple pulpit at the front - no altar. The pastor wore a plain suit, was accompanied by nobody else, led in prayer, and preached a simple sermon. Some persons might sing a special number, and there may be a choir singing a few hymns. It was all very different in decor and decorum, and it took some adjusting.

But the people were also very different, and that made an impression on me. I was quite willing to give up an ornate church full of dead people for a simple one with a few friendly, smiling, gracious people, young and old.

## Particle - **Tears of Sorrow to Tears of Joy**

About a week after my conversion, the evangelist Ken Campbell, with music director Jim Reese, visited Prince Albert and preached at a school gym. They recruited me to sing in the choir. Several times, I could hardly sing for the joy welling up within me; I choked back the lump in my throat while tears flowed - I should have let myself go and freely bawled.

Only a week earlier I was smoking cigars, proud and miserable, and now I was happily hoping to see people come forward to accept the invitation to receive the Lord their Savior. When they did, I was moved to tears. I was a different person, no doubt.

## Particle - **The Impatience of Youth**

One Sunday morning when Ken Campbell gave an altar call after his sermon at the Alliance Church, I felt compelled to go forward, but I resisted. As four women came forward, he mentioned that while there were four women at the cross, there was only one man. That did it - I was going to be that man. I loosed my grip from the pew in front of me and went forward.

There were seven of us in all, including the evangelist and the pastor directing us to a room in the back. We all cried and cried. I never saw so many tissues used at once! None of us could stop crying for some time. Why were we all crying so? I didn't know then (I thought I knew), but I know now and will tell you later.

It was then that I told Ken I wanted to preach. He said, "Wait a few years." I was surprised. "A few years? That is a long time! How about now, in the next few months?"

The impatience and presumption of youth! I had no idea what was ahead of me, and how long it would be before I would be taken by the Lord to serve Him. It was to be **many** more years than I thought Ken meant, or than **he** was even thinking.

The surprising spirit and significance of this event would be revealed to me some years later. I discovered that the going forward that day, which I thought to be God's stirring in me, was something very different, though God was in full control all along.

#### Particle - **How to Butt Out**

I tried to quit smoking and found it difficult. George gave me some advice: "Ask the Lord to take away the desire for smoking, and you won't have to quit!" I did ask the Lord, and within a month, smoking was history. God has been faithful - to this day.

Though I had successfully quit smoking years before and relapsed, this time the quitting was for good.

#### Particle - **A Suicidal Habit**

How did my smoking start? I had picked it up in my mid teens, out of curiosity and wanting to be "cool." I would not listen to those who cared, to those who knew better. Etched in my memory was an image of a cool, tough guy, like James Dean, with jacket slung over his shoulder and a cigarette hanging from his mouth, playing on a pinball machine, an image I thought desirable.

I also believed, contrary to my father's warning, that I could quit any time I wanted, which was true. The problem was that as I continued, the less I wanted to quit, until I could not want to quit even if I wanted to! Yes, I think that's how it works.

As I see young people light up today, in spite of the common public admonitions and regulations, I shake my head. "People, why?" I ask. "If you only knew!"

I think of the manufacturers who prey on the young, callously profiting by the smoker's self-inflicted process of demise, for which the supplier is as much, if not more, to blame than the smoker.

The world is full of evils, smoking not being the greatest of them. Humankind, trying to please itself, is bent on self-destruction. It is succeeding.

#### Particle - **Regret, Not Hypocrisy**

I smoked, ignoring my father's and mother's admonitions. Moreover, my father was a smoker, and I thought, "He's a hypocrite. He tells me not to smoke and there he is, smoking. Who is **he** to preach to **me**?" However, he admitted that he was hooked and if he could, he would quit or turn back the

clock and not start. He was concerned the same would happen to me. There is no hypocrisy in that; his was the voice of bitter experience, speaking to someone he cared about.

### **Particle - George's Streak of Self-Righteousness**

I liked George Lynn, and I cannot diminish the importance of his impact on my life, though the credit must go to Jesus Christ, where it surely completely belongs. I'd like to relate a side of George, however, that will be relevant when I speak of things to come concerning him. George, as any man, had his weaknesses - he had a self-righteousness that did not glorify the Lord. For example, he proudly displayed his memorization of Scripture and of the books of the Bible.

One day I questioned prayer in public (Matthew 6:5-6), and he said, "Victor, I went into a restaurant one day. Sitting there was a man who lit up a cigarette while he waited for his order. On the other hand, when my order came, I bowed my head and gave thanks. There he was, glorifying the Devil, and there I was, glorifying God."

Such things did I witness with George. As time passed and I learned more of the Bible and the stories Jesus taught, I thought, "What is the difference between George comparing himself to that smoker and the Pharisee comparing himself to the publican (Luke 18:10-14)? Both George and the Pharisee prayed while looking down on the one who is not as good as they are (in their eyes)."

Years later, I would see things of George that were not pleasant to see, taking place not only in this world, but also in the next.

### **Particle - Little Chicks Soon Get Homely**

But I should talk about self-righteousness! One day my parents talked me into coming on a May long weekend to Ron and Barb's to help plant potatoes. I was going to show them how a Christian helps out and works hard! I planted hard and fast. I was later to learn that I had planted too deep and packed the earth too solidly. None of my potatoes came up, while everyone else's did.

We new believers can be such a self-righteous lot! It reminds me of how chicks are cute when first hatched, but soon turn downright ugly, until they grow out of it.

### **Particle - Grandmother Grandstands and Grandslams**

I paid Dora Hafichuk, my paternal grandmother, a visit. She was quite alarmed by my sudden interest in the Bible and my life being turned around so much that it divided me from family. Her greatest concern was my leaving the Catholic Church and the many things I was sharing with everyone that were so contrary to Catholic doctrine and practice.

In our visit, she gave it all she had to impress me with her Catholic devotion to God. She spoke of the horrors of how they treated Jesus so brutally at His time of death, mentioning the different aspects of His suffering, expressing great sorrow for Him in piteous, affected tones. I knew there was something wrong with her perspective, but I was too young in my spiritual development to understand.

I now realize that it is not about pitying Jesus Christ. In fact, to do so is an act of direct disobedience. Jesus Himself said:

**“Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t cry for Me. Cry for yourselves and for your children” (Luke 23:28 MSG).**

Mel Gibson’s *The Passion* inordinately focuses on His suffering. It is as if we could appreciate His sacrifice, in the very flesh that crucified Him. We are not saved by pitying Him; we are saved because He has pity on us. We are to be thankful for His sacrifice, but that can only happen if we have experienced the reality of the new birth made possible by His death and resurrection in us. (As you may know, Mel Gibson is an orthodox Catholic.)

Many years later, it would be revealed to me that my grandmother’s performance was an unwitting mystical reenactment of the weeping of Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14).

As I left, my grandmother pulled out her rosary and challenged me to kiss the crucifix. To prove that my testimony or new religious persuasion was not antiChrist, I reluctantly kissed it. I immediately perceived a mild grin on her face, not of thankfulness or relief, but of satisfaction that I had somewhat come her way.

I realized I had done wrong by honoring an image, something clearly condemned by God in the Second Commandment. I came to regret having succumbed at that moment, though the Lord never chided me for it.

#### Particle - **Two Different Gods?**

I had conflicts with my new companions at the Alliance. I was reading my Bible avidly, and I discovered that few people in the church read theirs. While they had their pet verses to support their primary doctrines, it was about all they had. I found truths in Scripture, and in sharing these, I found myself at odds with others whom I expected to be knowledgeable and pious.

For example, when I found that God said He would bring sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beast to judge His people, they had a hard time with that. “He **allows** evil, but He doesn’t **do** it,” they said. I gave them passages, of which there were several, that proved He not only **allowed**, but also **did**. Somehow they denied the validity of those Scriptures, awkwardly explaining them away.

To them, it seemed to be all about love. Love is the thing, surely, and how could I disagree? But to me, love without truth was like refined, processed sugar - sweet, but nutritionless and even highly detrimental to one’s health.

#### Particle - **Some Curious Christian Differences**

Not only were there differences between me and the others in terms of interest and knowledge of Scripture (I saw some plain Biblical declarations, while they did not), I also came to discover that those I thought to be pious were not as pious as they appeared. For example, it seemed that most were not tithing to the church as I was and as was preached.

Another difference I found (and this one subtly and quietly poked at me so as to make me feel rather lonely) was that very few people I knew in these circles ever had division in their families. If they purportedly believed and their families did not, there was still not the division in most cases; they seemed to get along. There was a stark difference between their lots and mine. I had strong opposition from my family; there was no compromise, no “live and let live” scenario of any kind. It was all or nothing on both sides.

Not so with my new companions. They could visit about all sorts of things, perhaps occasionally even about the things of God, and get along just fine. I saw little division between apparent believer and unbeliever in their midst. Usually, their families were members of the same church or at least other evangelical denominations; they all got along quite well for the most part.

This made me wonder if there was not something essentially wrong with me and my relationship with God. Perhaps I was too zealous, demanding, dogmatic, legalistic, religious, ignorant, or too young in the Lord to know any better? I didn't know, but eventually I found out the reason for this difference between us. It was a sobering revelation, and I would be alone again.

#### **Particle - Burping and Soiling Diapers**

I also recall being very religious, and I have no doubt there were many who had to bite their tongues, having to endure my spiritual infancy. It could have done me some harm if they had expressed the contempt that I may have deserved, but I think it would have done them more harm than me. It seemed that men would not discourage me, but those who offend a young one, though a foolish one, have a conscience to wrestle with thereafter. I have offended in such a way, as you will see, and I was so sorry ever since.

**[“I have hurt and I have been hurt; it is easier and better to be hurt” \(Proverb 1462, ThePathofTruth.com\).](#)**

#### **Particle - Touching Base with Harry Roder**

I was excited about my new life and freedom. One of the first people that came to mind to share with was Concept-Therapy instructor, Harry Roder. I wrote him saying, “Harry! I have the Answer! I have ‘cosmic consciousness’ - and Jesus did it! When I wrote telling you of all the problems I had, asking for answers, you told me I would get my answers the next year or the year after at ‘phase such-and-such’ seminar. Jesus didn't make me wait! He answered my questions, all of them! I don't need Concept-Therapy! I don't have to pay a cent! Truth is free, here and now, and you can have it, too!”

Harry never replied. The wisdom of God is foolishness to men.

#### **Particle - Tell It Like It Is**

I had this contention with the Eidses, above others: “Why didn't you tell me more about the Lord? Why were you not more persistent? Wasn't the Lord more important to you than Amway, LOC, PV, or Rich DeVos?”

Lenore had tried to give me her witness of the Lord in various tactful ways, but I was now feeling like, “You should have told me straight out! Why did you beat around the bush? Where were your priorities? Why did you hold out on me? This is the very thing I was looking for and needed so badly!”

#### **Particle - Dissatisfaction from the Upper Levels**

I also discovered that I had greatly let them down in Amway. They had hoped that I would be a promising breakthrough in their business. But it was not to be. God had other plans.

When I set Amway aside to sell mobile homes, the people in my downline were left to fend for themselves. Bert and Helen Huebner, Ralph and Lenore's sponsors, were not happy with me. They said I had recklessly abandoned my downline, and they probably thought I also disillusioned Ralph and Lenore. The Huebners did not seem to know or care that I didn't have a stable downline to begin with. Those in my organization were not motivated to continue. I was forever pushing them, and I was tired of it; I had had enough.

### **Particle - Two Masters, One for the Lips, the Other for the Heart**

Though Bert and Helen professed faith in Christ, I didn't appreciate their ways. Bert went to church, and he preached or witnessed to others, but his motivation was to sponsor them into Amway. They rationalized that they were giving a "hand up" rather than a "hand out." From Rich DeVos' inspirational leadership, they repeated the principle that rather than continuously give a man fish to eat, it was better to teach a man to fish, so he could be independent. Thus, they promoted free enterprise rather than socialism.

They were confusing free enterprise with salvation, however, and Jesus Christ with Rich DeVos. Their goal, it seemed, was more to sponsor people into their Amway distributorship network than to usher souls into the Kingdom of Heaven. As professing believers, the Huebners seemed unaware of the Lord's words:

**"No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24 MKJV).**

**"Do not lay up treasures on earth for yourselves, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up treasures in Heaven for yourselves, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21 MKJV).**

A tragedy would come for the Huebners that would prove these words of the Lord true:

**"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26 KJV)**

### **Particle - What One Sows, He Surely Reaps**

Becoming a believer, I sought to break ties with those who were not believers, according to this Scriptural counsel of the apostle Paul:

**"Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, for it cannot be done. How can right and wrong be partners? How can light and darkness live together?" (2 Corinthians 6:14 GNB)**

When I was transferred to Prince Albert with Homes Canada, the year before I believed, Dave Miller, my partner in the house we had purchased, collected the rent from our roomers and lived in the house while I rented elsewhere. Except for making the mortgage payments, he didn't allow for his advantages, which I felt was unfair.



When I tried to discuss this with him, he wouldn't listen. When I realized I would likely not be returning to Winnipeg, I gave him notice that I had decided to sell my half. David, in great and surprising bitterness, pressed for a brutal buyout, while I was in the disadvantage of working and living hundreds of miles away.

I couldn't understand at the time why he reacted the way he did. Bewildered by his attitude, chagrined that a friend should treat me that way, and not wanting to strive over financial matters as a Christian, I caved to a very unreasonable offer he made me for the house, wherein I lost thousands of dollars. It hurt, but I felt helpless, not wanting to fight him. I know that part of it was that I did not wish to bring shame to the Lord by an unChristian strife over money matters.

I had, however, once mistreated him in the situation with Ken Buehner and the Queen Anne cookware.

The cookware was worth \$200 wholesale. It was only fair that I split that with Dave, but no, I had to be a selfish brute. As a consequence, Dave ended up taking all my furniture when we sold the house, paid no realtor fees to buy my half, yet charged me realtor fees for my half of the house in the event that he would have to sell it by realtor in future. What's more, he forced me to sell him the house for about 20% less than it might have sold for on the market. My selfish gain of \$100 cost me a possible \$3,000 or more, not to mention the torment of being abused, which might be even more costly. Dave got me good, and I had it coming. We reap what we sow; don't doubt it for a moment. God was in this all the way, dealing with me as He does with all men.

The lessons? Listen to the caring advice of your elders, especially of your parents (my father had cautioned me against going into a partnership). Also, understand what you are doing when you go into partnerships with others. Try to anticipate problems, prepare, and make allowances for them, not that you will foresee them all. If you mustn't go into a partnership, don't do it. The potential gains are not worth the heartache and frustration.

Having said this, there have been successful partnerships in the world, wherein the advantages outweighed the disadvantages, or so I am told. It might be wise to find out why or how, before assuming partnerships work.

But most importantly, here is the real lesson: Do to others as you would have them do to you. They will not be nearly so swift or inclined to reward you with evil. One can only reap what he or she sows. Had I not sown, I would not have reaped.

### **Particle - No Restitution, No Forgiveness**

There are those who think that once one has repented before God, confessing oneself a sinner, it is finished and there is no need of restitution or amends of any kind. That is a false repentance. If one is not prepared to make things right where possible (it is not always possible), confession or "accepting Jesus as Savior into one's heart" is not sufficient to God. On the contrary, it is a sham and a thumbing of the nose at Him. Genuine repentance brings fruits of love, justice, equity, and truth for all.

"The past is forgotten; the slate is wiped clean," some argue. That is a false gospel, founded on lies. Shall I keep the watch I stole from my neighbor and wear it proudly, even in his presence, simply because I am forgiven and saved? Should I wear it while I witness to him of how God made my life right? Shall my neighbor be pleased? What do you think?

Or shall I wear it only when he isn't present, perhaps at prayer meetings and Bible studies?

One who does not retribute is not saved.

### **Particle - The Joy of Restitution**

Upon repentance, I had a great desire to make things right wherever I could, and it was a joy. I recalled taking a 3-hole puncher and something else from my office at the Bay when I had left two years earlier. I wrote Jerry Jellison, confessed my offence, and included a check in payment and then some, along with a testimony.

When I was at the Bay, he was courting a woman who was a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses, so I suspected that my act of repentance might have some effect on him, though that was not my primary motive for compensating for the stolen equipment. He replied with gratitude and wonder, for which I was thankful.

### **Particle - Apology to Frank Hickey**

I then apologized to Frank Hickey of the Bank of Nova Scotia. I did not expect he would forgive me, because I had assaulted his dignity and person, besides committing a crime. I somewhat tried not to incriminate Homes Canada. He was gracious about it, though puzzled.

The people that bought the mobile home were very happy, and they thanked me some time later. The last I heard, they did not default.

I did not know it then, but sincere apologies would become a significant part of my life. I would be constantly offending and constantly apologizing for many years to come.

### **Particle - More Joy**

I then drove to Dauphin and went straight to the owners of the drive-in theatre. Working for them while in junior high school, I had stolen revenues at the ticket booth. I confessed this to them, willing to pay whatever they required (I did not know how much I had taken). They were surprised that I had stolen, thankful that I owned up to it, and gladly forgave me. I was thankful.

### **Particle - And More, All with Forgiveness**

Recalling only a particular market gardener, but not the rest of the private gardens we had randomly raided, I went to the owner, Zenin Bilous, and confessed my sin to him and his wife, Sharon. I told them the cause of my change in heart, and I offered restitution. Their reaction was the same as that of the others, one of surprise, appreciation, and glad forgiveness of debt.

It was indeed a pleasant activity, this confessing and being willing to make things right. It would also have been good had I been required to pay, but not one person demanded a thing of me or would accept restitution. All were thankful, and my guilt was removed.

### **Particle - Restitution to an Institution**

When I joined Amway as an independent distributor in 1971, I had gone to the Bank of Montreal on Broadway in Winnipeg to get a loan for buying Amway inventory. The credit loans manager, Chuck

Wilcox, trusted me and lent me the money without collateral. I soon fell into uncontrollable debt, however, and defaulted.

When the Lord turned everything around for me, I returned to that bank nearly two years later to pay off the loan, which they had already written off. While Chuck was no longer there, the manager was. He marveled, and though he did not press me to pay, he happily accepted, thanked me, and I went my way. It was good to be able to do it.

I know the bank did not need to be paid, but I needed to pay.

#### Particle - **Powerful Catholic Apologetics**

In the first months of repentance and deliverance from my sins, I read a book by John O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions*. This book was a defense of the Catholic Church and its doctrines. I don't recall who gave it to me, but I was moved by it and intellectually persuaded that, indeed, the Roman Catholic Church was the one true Church, and her doctrines and practices true and godly. I began telling people at the Alliance Church that I needed to go back to the Catholic Church. They were quite disturbed by the prospect.

#### Particle - **Seeking Social Sympathy**

Paul Dull owned a motel and trailer court near our Homes Canada office in Prince Albert. I was always trying to make business connections and alliances to improve and establish sales. Paul was sending business to Frank Scheller and Harold Duncan of P.A. Mobile Homes, my competitor. These were local people, while I was the stranger in town - life can be difficult and uncomfortable for strangers.

Paul was Catholic. We had agreeable conversations about Catholicism and O'Brien's book. The thought of winning Paul's favor and alliance was a comforting one. This comfortability of friend versus the uncomfortability of foe was another facet of the temptation to go back to familiar territory.

Did he send me any business? No, although I'm sure that if he thought to earn more referral fees from me, he would have done it, whether I was Catholic or not. Money is a mighty motivator.

#### Particle - **My Eighth Injury - A Drop at Death's Door Deals Deliverance**

One day, only months after my conversion and just days before I was planning to go forward at the Alliance to announce that I was returning to the Catholic Church, I became very ill. Late that evening, Murray and Ila, my landlords, saw my car uncusomarily home and found me in bed with a high temperature, vomiting green bile. They immediately took me to the hospital and contacted my young doctor, Lorne Rabuka, who was also the adult Sunday school teacher at the Alliance Church.

Dr. Rabuka had been treating me for heartburn in the past months when I complained of abdominal discomfort. At the hospital, he didn't know what was wrong. An older doctor happened to walk by and saw me on a gurney in the hall. He came over, inquired, gave me a press in the lower abdomen that nearly sent me through the ceiling, and said, "I think you will find that he has acute appendicitis. We need to get him into the operating room immediately."

This was around midnight. By two o'clock in the morning, they were operating. I was told later that I had been on the verge of a burst appendix, which could have meant death.

Was this an injury? Yes, it was and not an insignificant one at that. The injury was my doing by a prolonged lifestyle process, primarily through poor diet.

Whereas doctors for a long time believed it to have no use, now we are told that the appendix supplies lubricant to facilitate cleansing the bowel and supply the intestines with beneficial flora. How often have I suffered from constipation - though I can't tell the exact cause! If what they now say is true, the missing appendix may be a factor.

#### Particle - **Some Busybodies to Be Appreciated**

A lesson: Don't be too concerned about landlords and neighbors you may consider to be busybodies! Had Murray and Ila not checked in on me, it's possible you wouldn't be reading this. Nevertheless, God sent both them and the nosy doctor who successfully diagnosed me in time.

#### Particle - **The Children of This World Wiser in Their Generation**

Another lesson: My doctor, a graduate from Prairie Bible Institute, Three Hills, Alberta, and professing believer in Christ, had set up practice on his own not long after getting out of medical school. I had gone to him because he was a Christian, and I didn't know better. He had been treating me for a few months because I complained about abdominal discomfort. He gave me stuff to drink, and that was it. Though well meaning, he was not experienced or knowledgeable. I could have died because of his incompetence.

Every doctor who graduates from medical school should be required to work as an apprentice or associate with experienced doctors for several years. I know that some people professing Christ believe that they know better than those who don't profess faith and that they ought not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, whether in business or even in consultation. They would prefer to be "led by God" rather than by unbelieving men. But Jesus said that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

I may not be alive today had it not been for the older doctor present that night. Even as I lay on the gurney, Dr. Rabuka couldn't identify my problem. Was that older doctor a believer? I don't know, and it doesn't matter. He was sent of God to help, and help he did. God is over all and is no respecter of persons; each has his or her place. Christian doctors ought to be willing to learn from non-Christian doctors, and vice versa; that goes for every other occupation.

#### Particle - **Switching Sources of Spiritual Sustenance**

Within two days or so, I was out of the hospital and convalescing at home. I went home early because I had no medical coverage, being a Manitoban out of province and not having tended to the paperwork when I first transferred (Homes Canada had led me to believe the stay in Saskatchewan was temporary and that I would soon be back in Manitoba, but they changed their minds about a sales branch in Winnipeg). Dr. Rabuka was kind to have forfeited surgery fees on his part, knowing I did not have coverage. Perhaps he had misgivings about his incompetence?

When the hospital asked for my choice of minister or priest, I did not have Ernest Regier, the Alliance pastor, visit me; I had the Catholic priest do so, which disturbed my Alliance friends,

though they faithfully visited me and did not argue or criticize. All they did was pray (I didn't know of their prayers till weeks later).

I had many questions to ask of the Catholic priest. I found him amiable and persuasive, yet unobtrusive, but I found his knowledge of the Bible to be limited and his opinions of it not credible. I now look back and realize I was learning to use the Bible as my authoritative source to determine truth from error. There always seemed to be answers for questions and explanations of things in Scripture when I needed them.

#### Particle - **Timely Words from a Stranger**

Ila Garneau had a friend visiting her who also professed faith. One evening, her friend had some words for me that stuck at a time of need. The Catholic priest had said some speculative things of Adam, Eve, Eden, and the Trees - he said those things never really happened, but were an allegory. I repeated these things to the ladies, arguing that the Bible didn't say those things were not allegorical, to which she replied, "Neither does the Bible substantiate them as allegorical." That was true; in fact, the genealogies indicate Adam and Eve were real persons.

#### Particle - **Man Fails...**

By God's appointment, George Lynn happened to be back in town the week I was convalescing. He visited with me for a few hours, and we argued over Catholic doctrine. He was upset while I was not, and with my intellectual arguments, which I learned from *The Faith of Millions*, George was stumped. I was not angry with him this time, and at the end of our visit, I asked that we pray together. He consented, and later confessed that he had been humbled because he was not the one to suggest we pray. He went away crestfallen, knowing I was happy and determined to go back to the Catholic Church, fully persuaded of its authenticity and authority.

#### Particle - **...but God Prevails**

All was not done, however. Until getting ill, I had been reading through the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, a few chapters each day, and at this point I was beginning Paul's first epistle, the one to the Romans. In that week, having plenty of time, which was quite unusual for me, I read all of Paul's epistles.

By the time I reached the Book of Hebrews, God had opened my eyes. I was amazed. He reached me to the heart. He unveiled to me the truth of what Paul was preaching. Though I had been persuaded otherwise by intellectual argument, I realized that what Paul was teaching was greatly at odds with what the Catholic Church taught and practiced. The contrast was stark. It was a bright and holy light that shone onto the pages of Scripture and into my mind and heart.

I could say without exaggeration that the difference between what the Catholic Church taught and practiced on the one hand, and what the apostle Paul taught in his epistles on the other, was and is as black and white. I knew that the Catholic Church and the Bible were diametrically opposed to each other in both letter and spirit. God was merciful to me in my delusion and affliction. I knew I could not go back.

When I reported to my Alliance friends what had happened, they marveled and rejoiced. They had been holding prayer vigils for me.

## Particle - **Back on Track**

Paul didn't lay down his life in vain over nineteen hundred years ago. I was delivered from the power of deceptive doctrine and religion by his ministry in the Lord. God bless you, brother Paul! As it is written:

***“Concerning the works of men, by the Words of Your lips, I am kept from the paths of the destroyer” (Psalms 17:4 MKJV).***

We have discovered there are those who condemn the apostle Paul, claiming his Gospel was deceptive and contrary to that of Jesus Christ and His apostles. Those who think so are presumptuous, self-seeking liars in great darkness, and they will have their reward. There is not the slightest difference between what Paul and Jesus taught; they are one.

## Particle - **My Second Baptism, Yet My First**

With a little subtle persuasion from Ernest Regier and the congregation, I came to be baptized, that is, fully immersed, in the church baptistery. He baptized me “in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” The baptism was based on the fact that I had experienced a genuine repentance and life change in the Lord, and I was prepared to go on with Him.

I say this was my “second” baptism because, theoretically, I had been “baptized” (by an anointing of oil) as an infant in the Catholic Church, but truly, that was no baptism at all. What had I, as an infant, known of repentance and faith, without which, baptism is entirely meaningless?

## Particle - **Enter Temptation**

On the heels of my appendicitis bout, I received a call in Prince Albert from a pretty woman I had known in Winnipeg, Diane Lazaruk. She had arrived in Saskatoon as a stewardess with Air Canada and invited me to spend the evening with her. I drove the 90 miles to the Bessborough Hotel, picked her up at her room, and we went out for dinner.

This was an ideal opportunity I had once hoped for, handed to me on a platter. Would she have allowed that opportunity for relations? I don't know. I do know that instead of trying to bed her, I tried to convert her. I was full of zeal and pressure. I am so sorry for having tried so hard, doing what I thought was right. Yes, I witnessed of the Lord and kept myself from fornication, but the works of men, as pious as they may appear, are not good in God's sight. Again, as it says:

***“Concerning the works of men, by the Words of Your lips, I am kept from the paths of the destroyer” (Psalms 17:4 MKJV).***

Diane was greatly vexed, though she suffered it patiently. I was a spiritual infant, one who thought he knew so much, but knew so little. I turned so many people off with my religious zeal and witnessing. However, I take some solace in the knowledge that babies soil diapers, burp up on shoulders, cry, and are incapable of doing many things adults have learned to do, yet they are constantly trying and learning. So I've tried, been trying - very trying - and I've learned. We have our stages of growth, and to condemn myself for my infantile ignorance would be tantamount to condemning babies for theirs.

Diane was not a happy woman that night, and I had no reason to be a happy man. I realize as I write this, however, that a temptation was presented to me on the very heels of a momentous

breakthrough - revelation of truth concerning the Catholic Church, whereby I was kept from delusion. By God's grace, I didn't succumb to this temptation. And that is often how things work - temptations follow blessings and successes.

#### **Particle - RCAF 5BX and Weight Watchers**

Possibly because of how I ate in my formative years, I have been plagued with eating and weight battles all my life. When Dr. Croll put me on a diet in January of 1971, wherein I shed 28 pounds in 35 days, coming down from 193 to 165, I was quite happy about it and wanted to stay that way. It did not happen. By 1973, I had regained 18 pounds.

So I joined Weight Watchers, and for the next several years, I kept my weight in check by adopting their diet principles. By the time I met my wife, I was 160 pounds and still losing. I was also in good physical condition, following the Royal Canadian Air Force 5BX program.

While neither Weight Watchers nor the RCAF exercise program may seem spiritual, I have no doubt that the Lord provided me with these to deal with the realities of our infirmities in this world. Do I recommend these over others? Not necessarily. They happened to be the provision for my needs at the time. (I have continued using 5BX on and off until a short while ago, discontinuing it when it aggravated my neck and knee injuries.)

#### **Particle - Freedom from Debt**

Ever since I bought my first car, I was in debt, and try as I might, I couldn't come out of it. I consolidated my loans and credit card debt and started again from there to go even deeper into debt. When the Lord took over my life in February of 1973, all that changed. That year, I made nearly twice as much money as I had with the Bay and three times as much as I had the year before with Homes Canada (I was only with them for about half a year in 1972).

In my first year as a believer, I was out of debt in a matter of months, something I was not able to do in years, though taxes were higher and I was bringing offerings to the Lord - 10% of my gross income, most of which I gave to the Alliance Church.

#### **Particle - My Challenger**

Now it was time to buy a car. My old Chevy Impala with a rebuilt engine was burning oil, and it was not the most reliable car, with over 100,000 miles on it (which, in those days, was passing its limit). Tim Friesen also needed a car, so together we went shopping.

I was going to buy a good used car, nothing fancy, something for maybe \$2,000, which was about half the price of a sporty new one. Tim wanted a new one. We shopped around in Prince Albert and then went to Saskatoon. We finally came to Patrick Dodge. Looking around the sales lot, Tim spotted the one he wanted - a 1973 blue Charger, I believe, and I saw a new 1973 Dodge Challenger, canary yellow, with black vinyl top, Ram air hood, console, bucket seats, and 4-barrel carb, complete with a gas-guzzling engine. The color wasn't my choice, but the car was.

Tim and I thought we might have some leverage, seeing we were buying two cars at once, for cash. I had the money to buy a new car! We dickered some, and it seemed that the salesman and manager were quite anxious to sell. We bought, were very thankful to have the cars, and the dealership was thankful to make the sales.

I never thought I would have my Dodge Challenger! I had not even thought of getting one, but there it was, and fully paid for. God had given me a treat. Don McLeod sold me the car after all, years before. All he needed was a time machine, and he would have been set to cash in, but then he wouldn't have needed to sell cars!

#### **Particle - Archie Marries**

I received a wedding invitation from my brother Archie in Toronto. He was getting married and asked me to be an usher. The bride-to-be was 4'11" Cathie Duck, daughter of Gordon Donald Duck.

I was asked to wear black platform shoes, they being the fashion in those days, and I did. I flew to Toronto, and it was not long before I found myself somewhat avoided by people. I had talked to everyone in the family about the Lord by then, and Archie had apparently warned them that I "got religion."

It was not easy being a stranger with strangers in a strange city, while they drank and carried on. It was perhaps even harder being with those with whom I once drank and caroused, Rick Berezowski being one of them, who was Archie's best man (what a character that guy was! He knew no inhibitions or boundaries and laughed at so many things I could only squirm at).

I tried sharing with Archie the importance of getting his life right with God. I shared that same message with anyone who seemed open, including Cathie's father and Archie's pals. Archie and his friends were quite cynical or perhaps bashful. It was not long, however, before things would change, at least for Archie and Cathie.

#### **Particle - A Fear of Competition**

As I heard it from Bob Vail and Terry Johnston, Dennis Skuter, their manager of the Dauphin branch, betrayed them. He had secretly begun his own mobile home dealership next door, in competition with them, and used their resources and contacts while pretending to be working for them as manager of their lot.

I knew that Dennis Skuter was an ambitious, unscrupulous young man who would step on anyone to achieve his goals. I had experienced him in the Amway business. I was also aware that he bore a vengeful grudge against Homes Canada, vowing to put them out of business if he could. He tried to hire me out of Homes Canada.

While I knew Dennis to be a very selfish and unreasonable man, could there have been another side to the story Bob and Terry gave me? Why was Dennis bitter if he was the only one in the wrong?

During this time, I had a peculiar fear of competitors winning over me in merchandising, leaving me with valueless inventory (this fear was formed at the Bay, but I didn't know it at the time). So when Dennis brought his mobile home dealership to Prince Albert, I was alarmed. True, I had no ownership in Homes Canada and it was not my only source of livelihood. I was still afraid, and that fear would remain with me for a long time.

#### **Particle - Secrets of Sales Success**

I have had that kind of fear generally. For how much must I sell my goods? Will customers buy from me regardless of competition, or will they go over to the competition if our prices are higher? I



have come to know that unless we have something to offer of true value compared to others, and customers understand it, they will go elsewhere, if we have the higher price.

What persuades people? The dollar wins out in almost all cases. Business people who depend on friendship and customer loyalty independent of competitive value for their purchase dollars are headed for disillusionment. Customers do business with their own betterment foremost in mind. The merchant must provide something his customers want or need and for which they are willing to pay.

I've learned that it's always a two-way street, give and take (the give coming first).

I've also learned that competition can prevail with dishonesty and ruthlessness, by hook or by crook. People can be easily deceived and are very prone to believing lies, especially if they think they have something to gain. I have been one such gullible person.

However, success in sales does not depend on price only, or even primarily, but on the ability of the salesperson to persuade the prospective client of the value or uniqueness of the product. Therefore, product knowledge is very important, not only of one's own product, but also of the competitor's.

Finally, I have learned that, oftentimes, the salesperson is the real product, and the product or service one sells is secondary. Trustworthiness and a sense of genuine goodwill are factors potential buyers are on the watch for, consciously or not.

#### **Partice - Another Black Sheep Discovered**

I soon discovered there was another member of the Hafichuk family who left the Catholic Church, she having come to profess personal faith in Jesus Christ. I wanted to talk to her, Mary Kozak, wife of Nick Kozak (who did not profess faith), and so I called her. I had met her and her two daughters years before, without knowing what had happened - her older daughter even babysat me.

Mary told me how the family shunned and disowned her when she left the Catholic Church. She expressed joy and excitement that I came to believe. Her daughter also marveled at the change in my life and how I was talking. They were attending the Worldwide Church of God, however, which I did not find capable of bringing people to a true relationship with Jesus Christ, though their step was in the right direction - coming away from Catholicism.

#### **Partice - Hypocrisy Harms**

I have gone through many painful situations when dealing with those who profess faith in Christ, but live otherwise. One of my first such experiences was with Gary Allen, who came to attend the Alliance Church. He was a farmer bachelor whom I assumed was a believer.

As I was a mobile home sales lot manager, a fellow came to me asking me to sell his used mobile home in the Whispering Pines Trailer Court. I consented, we agreed on a price, and Gary Allen came along looking for such a home. He was not prepared to see me profit by it, however. I have seen that farmers often have the mentality that one can only justly earn by physical exertion, by the sweat of the brow and callusing of hands. Ignorance of this sort does not appreciate the various intangible skills of the mind, which can be, and often are, far more necessary. Even farmers have to think, more than many! What will one pay for knowledge and experience?

He pressed me hard and repeatedly to find out how much I was making in the transaction, insisting that he wanted to be sure I was fairly paid for my work. Though I assured him I was satisfied with the amount (which was not at all exorbitant or unusual), he persisted.

I finally gave in, thinking, “I am a believer and he is a fellow believer, so I should be open about it; he is pressing me, perhaps he will understand.” So I caved, to my great chagrin. He was not happy about it at all, though my fee was more than fair, less than expected in the industry.

In the end, I let Gary buy the home directly, and he dropped by the office, paying me a quarter of what my commissions would have been. I felt like tearing up his check and saying, “Keep it; obviously, you need it more than I do.” But I accepted it, with gravel in my mouth for years thereafter, partially because of my lack of understanding, and partially because Gary conducted himself the way he did while professing Christianity. He was deceptive and quite overpowered by mammon.

### Particle - Money Matters - Too Much

In the following years, I came to understand that there are some things one simply does not tell another. Because one calls himself, or appears to be, a Christian does not mean he is one, or that he will act or live as one, **especially when money is involved**. I have certainly been guilty many times in money matters, to my shame and sorrow. I recognize that Gary was in bondage, no different from my own.

Again, the Scripture:

**“No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24 MKJV).**

### Particle - Nothings and Somethings

Have I learned discretion? Many would not bother or even be caught dead with a report of things I mention in this book. So why do I do this? Am I an idiot? Won't there be repercussions? No doubt, there will be. So will it be worth it? Will I be sorry for being honest and open, as I was with Gary Allen?

I relate these things because I would like to communicate some of the realities of humanity for the encouragement and sakes of all. I want to let people know they aren't alone in these little things that occupy the mind and heart, including those of believers in Christ. I'm not the only petty one here! At least in this earthly dimension, we are all cut from the same cloth.

We learn that little things are big and big things little, and who can tell the difference? I also perceive that most of us, if not all, put on fronts and hide these things behind a lot of polish and camouflage. Oh, we are a deceptive and vain bunch!

We also learn that what we practice and believe in private, we, sooner or later, come to speak and do in public. It's only a matter of time. And isn't it interesting how the older we get, the less we care about how we look or what others think of us? (Human character-discerning comedians have a grand time with this sort of stuff, don't they?)

While many would not bother writing about what would seem to be little nothings, I believe they are somethings to all. I have seen, read, and heard of great, wealthy, intelligent, educated, and powerful persons getting offended for the smallest things, being apparently petty. But what's petty, anyway?

### **Particle - Iron Sharpens Iron**

Are you aware that God sends into our lives people with faults and infirmities similar, if not identical, to ours, to deal with us and to deliver us from those faults and weaknesses? We can either get offended and hate those people, in which case we must hate ourselves for the same things (and do), or we can acknowledge God's redemptive work in our lives with the use of our enemies as tools to that end.

We need to thank God for those people, forgive them, and thus be forgiven ourselves. If we do not forgive them, we will remain with those same faults and weaknesses for which we resent, and will not forgive, others.

If I fail to forgive others for their offenses against me, I will remain with their faults.

### **Particle - The Greatest of Grievs**

Again I must confess that probably the most grievous thing to me is the hypocrisy of professing believers in Christ, speaking one way while living another, smiling while concealing fangs and a venomous tongue. I see those who call themselves Christians in love with money while professing godliness, going to church, reading the Bible, memorizing Scripture, wearing certain kinds of clothing, and keeping their day of the week, be it Saturday or Sunday. However, they live as does the world, according to its standards and mindset, in most of the socially acceptable ways, and often not even those.

These people anger me; always have, and likely always will as long as they are around. They are treacherous. By their profession of faith, they promise one thing, but deliver the opposite. They deceive, take unfair advantage, disappoint, and discourage faith in others, all the while acting pious. While I have tried to control my reactions towards them, I have not been able to rest in that restraint, whether their words and actions personally involve me or not.

The day would come when I would have it to speak out what was forming in me, but first things first - the beam would have to be removed from my eye.

### **Particle - Honor Your Father and Mother... or Not**

When I went home to Dauphin to visit my parents and family, my father was incessantly grieved because I left the Catholic Church. He was earnest to persuade me to come to Mass with them. I so struggled, thinking, "Does it really matter if I go? Will it hurt me if I do? If I don't go, it will hurt my parents. Is that right? Am I not to honor my father and mother?" I saw them in grief, and my heart was breaking for them. But I knew I could not go because the Lord was bringing me away. They cried and I cried, but the die was cast.

### **Particle - Jesus Dries the Dishes**

I occasionally visited Uncle Fred and Aunt Mary Prestayko on their Holstein dairy and grain farm five miles north and six miles west of Dauphin, Manitoba. I always enjoyed talking with them. One

day, as Aunt Mary washed the dishes, I took a tea towel and began drying. She looked at me and blurted out with surprise, “You’re helping me with the dishes! Nobody ever does that!” (It was not customary in our family and Ukrainian circles for men to help with dishes.)

Then suddenly she exclaimed, “I just remembered! I had a dream last night, and you know what? I was doing dishes and Jesus came and helped dry them! And I saw His mother standing in the doorway in the hall, right there!” She pointed. “She stood there with her hands clasped in front of her, arms hanging down, and she bowed her head in a humble way.”

I had been testifying to them of the Lord on that visit as well as on others. They soberly listened, apparently not believing, but not writing anything off, either. They were different from the others. Their only son, Bob, on the other hand, in his late thirties, was quite dismissive and jokingly mocked my profession of faith in Christ. We would see how things went for them.

### **Particle - Franko Comes to Free (or Foil)**

In 1973, “Father” Franko Szadiak, a former classmate at St. Vladimir’s Minor Seminary who went all the way to become a priest, came to visit me at my office in Prince Albert. I suspect my family sent him. He tried reasoning with me, while I testified to him of what the Lord had done for me. His main thrust of argument was, “How can the Body of Christ be divided? We are the one true Church, with the same Mass every week all over the world! We are the biggest, the oldest, and the original church, unified under one Head!”

By that time, the Lord had well delivered me from any doubts that He was leading me; He had delivered me from the delusion of Rome. Franko and I parted on friendly terms. Years later, I would come to see his sad and empty end.

### **Particle - Alcohol**

I put away alcohol altogether when receiving repentance toward God, more from the counsel of evangelicals (especially George Lynn) than from my own conviction. Yet it was good to do so, seeing I had such a pleasure in, and propensity for, drinking.

My father pressed me to have a sociable drink with him after my conversion. I wondered, “Why does he not press me to have a glass of water, a cup of tea or milk, or a soda? Why alcohol?”

Though he was not much of a drinker, he was offended that I would not drink with him. (It was the same with many others.) I wondered what power there was in alcohol that would provoke people to feel that way.

Perhaps that is why alcohol is called spirits. Alcohol is a symbol, or medium, if you will, of sociability in some circles. Eliminating alcohol, one is judged as antisocial, self-righteous, legalistic, or fanatical. Not only does this occur with new believers, it also occurs with alcoholics who have determined to kick the habit. They become despised and ostracized by their former drinking companions - no alcohol, no camaraderie. People take it personally. “As you do to alcohol, so you do to me.” It seems like it can be a religion in and of itself.

### **Particle - The Fruits of Excess Alcohol**

My Uncle Ernie Hafichuk and I had a talk one evening at a wedding. We stood outside the hall, debating the use of alcohol. Uncle Ernie disagreed with my stance of abstinence and argued that it

was not bad to occasionally have a sociable drink. I now think he was right, but I was also right for my time and circumstances.

Suddenly, out the front doors of the Ukrainian Catholic Hall tumbled my other Uncle Ernie (Mouck), drunk and raging after a spindly young fellow. Ernie Mouck was half again his size, more than twice his age, and viciously beating him until some came to break it up.

I felt that the Lord had just given my Uncle Ernie Hafichuk and me a confirmation of the validity of my stance. Uncle Ernie was speechless, and I rested my case. Tragically, Ernie Mouck would not be alone in the ravages of alcohol. His son, Butch, became an alcoholic barely, if not before, entering his teens.

#### **Particle - Preacher Perry F. Rockwood**

Perry F. Rockwood of Halifax, Nova Scotia was someone whose program, *The People's Gospel Hour*, I occasionally listened to. His message was simple enough, but it did not resonate with me, although I couldn't argue with the letter of his message. There was something about him that turned me off. I would find out later what it was.

#### **Particle - Herbert W. Armstrong**

I also tuned in to the radio program *The World Tomorrow*, and I occasionally read *The Plain Truth*, the complementary magazine published by the Worldwide Church of God. Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder, was an interesting speaker, but he seemed self-righteous and somewhat arrogant to me.

He claimed that nobody had been preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, or the Kingdom of God, for nineteen centuries. I did not believe that. How could others and I have been saved, if this had been the case? I certainly did not receive Christ by Armstrong's preaching, but I had by that of others.

Being in evangelical circles at the time, which rejected Armstrong, I was influenced to see him as a false prophet, but mostly for the wrong reasons. I read a tract written by Roger Campbell and distributed by Max Solbrekken about Armstrong entitled *Mr. Confusion*. While the writer was right in most of what he wrote, he was also doctrinally in error and biased, particularly in the matter of the trinity (not that Armstrong was right in that matter), though I did not realize it until later. (The distributor was an artificial copy of a man of God - see [Max Solbrekken - Canada's Own False Evangelist.](#))

More than Herbert, I enjoyed Garner Ted, his son. He was also charismatic, but in a more attractive way, and his preaching was exciting. However, one could pick up a spirit of cynicism, arrogance, and self-righteousness, which he perhaps inherited from his father. While Garner appealed to my flesh, he did not appeal to my spirit. I never could understand what his point was.

#### **Particle - John R. Rice**

*The Sword of the Lord* was a publication that stirred up considerable controversy among the evangelicals in the early seventies. John R. Rice was bombastic, lambasting evangelicals. I recall them saying he was a brother, but not very loving or Christlike. I didn't know what to make of Mr. Rice. Though he stood out as different among evangelicals, I was not drawn to his teaching.

#### **Particle - Heeding Head or Heart**

The issue was never a matter of doctrine to me so much as spirit and life. My guidelines for choosing my teachers seemed different than those of most others. I was led more by the strings of the heart than by the chains of the head or denominational partisanship, though I didn't know it.

#### Particle - Lukewarm Lambs, Likewise Leaders

Members of the Alliance Church once talked of how a visiting preacher confronted a congregation. He asked, "How many people here hate God?" No hands went up. "How many people are on absolute fire for God, willing to do anything for Him?" Very few, if any, hands went up. Finally, he asked, "How many are somewhere in between?" There was a great show of hands. He then had them open their Bibles to the following passage:

**"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16 MKJV).**

The fellow telling the story (himself an ordained preacher) laughed, saying, "Good thing he wasn't the pastor, because he wouldn't have been around long after that day. He had nothing to lose."

I knew that the traveling minister exposed the people. I also knew that most people in the Alliance congregation I attended would classify themselves as somewhere between passionate for Christ and dead against Him, which would mean lukewarm.

But I had some subconscious questions (which I didn't realize were there until years later): "Is it **not** the preacher's responsibility to tell the people the naked truth about their spiritual state? Why should he be afraid to speak reality? Is it up to the people to decide what their pastor says?" Even then, in my spiritual infancy, I knew the answers to those questions.

It could be objected that those on fire for God would not want to be so forward about it and wouldn't raise their hands. To that, I have three things to say:

**One**, they wouldn't admit to being lukewarm, which lukewarmness is abomination to the Lord.

**Two**, there was a great show of hands openly admitting to lukewarmness.

**Three**, Jesus said, "I delight to do Your will," and, "I have meat to eat you know not of," and, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it is accomplished!" and, "I always do those things which please Him," and, "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." He said many other such things, not reticent to openly declare His love and zeal for the Father. He was zealous for the will of God and made no apology for it. As He is, so should we be.

The **First Commandment** states, "You shall love the Lord your God **with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.**" Can I deny loving Him, while doing so with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength?

Of course, there will always be those who declare themselves zealous for God when they aren't really. And there may be some who are fully devoted to God, yet may not feel free in spirit to raise their hand in such circumstances or at certain times. The sons of God are led by the Spirit of God and not by men.

## **Particle - The Rapture**

In the Alliance Church, I was told of the rapture, an event wherein the Lord would physically appear in the sky without warning and take all those who believed to Heaven, leaving everyone else behind to suffer the great tribulation coming upon the earth.

This doctrine perplexed me. One day, as we worked on the new church structure the Alliance people were building, I asked Pastor Ernest Regier and Abe Friesen about it. To me, it was quite enigmatic and confusing. Some believed Jesus would come before the tribulation, some during, some after, but in all cases, He would come in physical form, taking some and leaving many.

“Is this doctrine true?” I asked. Abe replied, “It is a matter of faith.” Ernest said nothing that I can recall.

I didn’t know what to believe, but I didn’t have confidence that I would be one the Lord would take if He did come that way. It concerned me, especially in light of the dream I had, wherein He came and I was rejected. The rapture doctrine was a torment to me until God truly “raptured” me. Then I knew I was His (I knew I was Yours, Lord!). More on this later.

## **Particle - Is Bible School the Answer?**

I decided I would go to Bible school. My decision was, I think, partially a result of experiencing great deliverance and excitement of life in Christ, after a lifetime of slavery to sin, fear, failure, loss, and despair. I knew this change had been due to knowledge of God and the Scriptures, and if the Bible could make such a difference in my life, I wanted to know it as well as I could. I wanted to be equipped to share with my family, friends, and others effectively, so that they could also enter into the life of peace and joy, notwithstanding the conflicts and new challenges.

## **Particle - “Keep Going - You Are Not There Yet”**

Something else perhaps propelling me in the direction of Bible school was that I continually heard a still, small voice within, indicating to me to keep going, that I was not “there” yet. It was not in words so much as essence. Though I could not deny the wonderful change that had taken place in me, I still felt that somehow I was falling short of God’s will. Whenever I confided this dilemma to the pastors and others, they advised me that it was Satan trying to cause me to doubt my salvation. Nevertheless, try as I might to believe and to console myself, I could not escape that voice.

## **Particle - Bible School Chosen for Me**

When first beginning my search for a Bible school, I was perplexed about which one to choose of so many available. Though Pastor Regier had graduated from CBC (Canadian Bible College), he was quite reticent for some reason to recommend it. One day, Art Bunce, a Southern Baptist preacher from the U.S., was at our sales lot, looking for a mobile home for himself and his wife, Peggy. He informed me of a fledgling Southern Baptist Bible school, the Christian Training Center in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, only ninety miles away.

## **Particle - Southern Baptist Power**

I favored the idea of going to a fledgling school, notwithstanding disadvantages. Art contacted Jack Connor, the Southern Baptist minister in Prince Albert, who came to see me. He was handsome and

silver-haired, though not aged. I had a hesitation about him. He seemed quite proud, formal, starchy, and presuming to be superior in character. He had the peculiar habit of holding his right elbow to his body when shaking hands, apparently coercing the other person to come to him, and gazing in his or her eyes as though he was a discerning judge of character.

Jack and I visited and he suggested I talk to the now famous Henry Blackaby, pastor of the Faith Baptist Church in Saskatoon (he was not famous then).

### **Particle - First Impressions Not Good**

On to Saskatoon to see Henry. He was at the church - a small, old building that was in need of complete renovations. When I walked up to his open office door, there were a few men gathered with him, but I was invited in. I immediately sensed a formal atmosphere, and my inclination was to turn around and make a prompt retreat back to Prince Albert. Rightly or wrongly, I didn't heed my instincts.

My first impression of Henry was that he was proud and stuffy, though showing himself buoyantly friendly. He seemed like a public relations man or a lobbying businessman. I had similar hesitations about him as with Jack. I felt like a fish out of water. Still, I proceeded to state my purpose and considerations. We visited, Henry sold me, and I soon began to make arrangements to attend the Christian Training Center.

### **Particle - Spiritual Stillbirth**

Tim and I witnessed to several people who came shopping for a mobile home, taking every opportunity we could. Indeed, we sought to witness to any with whom we had business and social dealings. Jack Connor was seated in the office on one such occasion. Tim and I were leading a shy man and his young son through the Campus Crusade for Christ "Four Spiritual Laws" to a decision for Christ.

When they were fairly compelled to confess themselves sinners and Jesus Christ as their Savior, we closed with them in prayer, gave them some literature, told them to read the Bible, and sent them on their way.

Somehow we were aware that the man's wife was an atheist and would not take lightly what we had done (I think he told us). We also knew that if there was any opportunity for a home sale, it was gone, and we did not hear from them again (not that one hears from most walk-in traffic after the first visit anyway).

I later asked Jack if he had any thoughts on what he witnessed. "It seemed like a stillbirth to me," he replied. He was honest and straightforward about it, which was generally the way I saw Jack.

He didn't explain, I didn't understand, and I didn't dare ask what he meant. Many years later, I look back and see that whether he had an accurate analogy of what happened or not, the results were pretty much in agreement. We used moral compulsion with predatory personalities to do "good," and only served to offend people, spiritually and emotionally. We also did the Lord and His Name no honor, though we thought otherwise.

### **Particle - My First Marilyn in Christianity**



During that year, through Tim Friesen's brother Gerald and his girlfriend Cynthia, I met and dated Marilyn Paul, a young Salvation Army woman, daughter of Ralph Paul, a security officer at the Prince Albert Penitentiary. I grew to love her and possibly would have married her if not for the fact that her parents wanted me to be in the Salvation Army ministry with Marilyn.

It was only a few months after meeting Marilyn that I was attending the Christian Training Center and Henry was persuading me to go to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. It would take seven or more years to complete (I had to acquire a university degree first).

Marilyn's parents argued that she and I could become ministers together in two years with the Salvation Army, and the training would take place in eastern Canada rather than in the southern States.

It was apparent to me that Marilyn was not prepared to marry me otherwise, abiding by her parents' wishes, which was only right for her to do. She also could not fathom my taking all those years in school, waiting that long - waiting for what, I don't know, because I assumed we could be married while attending school. Frankly, I also had a hard time with the thought of seven years of study, and their alternative looked so nice and easy, but I couldn't accept it.

In discussing my quandary with Henry, his main objection to the Salvation Army was a doctrinal one - he disagreed with the Arminian theology, namely that one could lose one's salvation, as opposed to the Calvinistic doctrine of eternal security - once saved, always saved.

He also naturally disagreed with the Salvation Army's position on water baptism. While Baptists place such importance on water baptism that they should name themselves after this simple external rite, the Salvation Army did not believe water baptism to be necessary. Furthermore, the Army believed the uniform they wore was a suitable substitute for water baptism as a public Christian testimony. Henry did not think much of that, and frankly, neither did I; while I saw water baptism commanded in Scripture, there wasn't a snitch of instruction on uniforms.

I was a bit confused, however. In retrospect, I unconsciously felt these doctrines weren't really the issue, but I didn't know what was. What to choose - Marilyn, a pretty woman, and the down home, free and easy, street appeal Salvation Army, or the sophisticated, scholarly, "superior" Southern Baptist route? SA or SB?

For the time being, I remained at the school with the Southern Baptists. The day would come when I would see the fallacy of **any** kind of formal, institutional education as preparation for a true ministry of God. I would discover by revelation and Scripture that God just does not work that way.

### **Particle - Petting Off Limits for Singles**

While Marilyn and I dated, we petted in the car and at her door. One evening, while house-sitting for some friends, we became very physically involved, not that we had direct sex or undressed, but it was close, because we both experienced orgasm. I was alarmed and convicted of sin. I asked Marilyn to kneel with me at the couch, repent, confess, and pray the Lord's forgiveness. I was crying.

The whole incident didn't seem to bother her that much, though she seemed perplexed at my state. I think she held me in contempt to some degree, wondering what all the fuss was about. Perhaps she was convicted as well, but she didn't seem very agreeable with my perspective on things.

I had no right to do what I did with Marilyn. Those naming Christ as Lord have no right to do such things. Those who fondle outside of marriage fornicate. Those who cuddle and caress outside of marriage are calling for strokes of correction. We are to keep our vessels pure and ourselves from all temptations, not expose ourselves to them or indulge in them. Prenuptial petting is playing with fire.

### **Particle - Our Paths Part in a Peculiar Way**

In October of 1973, I had begun Bible school with the Southern Baptists in Saskatoon (more on that later), while Marilyn was training in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to be a registered nurse. She and I corresponded, and we got nowhere near an agreement regarding my career in ministry.

The situation also bothered me from another perspective - I thought the woman should follow the man, not the other way around. However, **shouldn't** the parents decide who should be their daughter's husband? It would not be right to marry a woman against her parent's will. According to what I read in Scripture and what I now understand from the Lord by revelation, it would be thievery and trespass to take someone's daughter, unless the parent was manifestly contrary to God. Marilyn was obeying her parents, and her parents didn't consent to her marriage outside the Salvation Army.

And for all I knew at the time, it could have been appropriate to follow Marilyn - the Pauls could have been right on their doctrinal and denominational position. The main thing was that we were not in agreement, right or wrong.

### ***"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3 KJV)***

I think the primary difference I was seeing in the two choices before me was that the Pauls, parents and daughter, seemed lackadaisical in faith. They didn't seem to be taking God seriously, whereas Henry seemed intensely interested in God and preaching, though he also could be light in certain ways, which disturbed me. Still, above all the searching and quandary I was in, I see that God was in full control, directing as always.

### **Particle - Unceremoniously Dismissed without Cause**

Because the school was only 90 miles away, I thought I might try to remain in Prince Albert, consolidate my classes into two days (there was flexibility), drive to Saskatoon, stay the night, take all the classes, return to Prince Albert, and do my homework at the office and at home for the next five days. I could continue to work for Homes Canada, strictly on commissions, in order to pay my way. For the two days gone, I could leave the office in Tim Friesen's hands, trusting him to help me.

I presented my thoughts by phone to co-owner Bob Vail, who didn't consent to my idea, but neither did he discuss it with me. Suddenly and without warning, Terry Johnston (Bob's partner) arrived with a new manager, Gary Stovin of Esterhazy, to replace me immediately. Had they said they were not in agreement with my plans, I have no doubt we could have come to an amicable arrangement, even if it meant my leaving altogether. Instead, they shocked me with instant dismissal, treating me as entirely untrustworthy. Furthermore, they did not pay me the employee benefits due.

## Particle - **All or Nothing**

The year before, Bob and Terry told me they had been betrayed by Dennis Skuter. I think they decided to prevent a possible betrayal or vengeful act. As unpleasant as it was, their preemptive action would have had a nastier impact on me, had I not had faith in God. I accepted the situation as if the Lord was saying, *“Victor, it must be a clean break; it is all the way or nothing. That is the way it must be.”* I had tried to preserve, and provide for, myself.

## Particle - **Those Not For Are Against**

What hurt even more when I was dismissed was that Tim, a professing believer, did not stand with me. Despite how he saw a presumed brother in Christ treated, summarily dismissed without warning, he was silent and remained with the company. He stood with unbelievers, loving his paycheck more than decency, justice, faith, and truth - in short, the Lord. He later confessed to me that he had resented me.

In any case, I was out the door and off to Bible school in Saskatoon, with bridges burned. The time would come when I would find out just how well Tim fared; it was not well at all. He hung around long enough to also be abused by them, and more.

## Particle - **Two Unreconciled Worlds**

I thought I had come to develop a trusting relationship with Bob Vail, whom I appreciated. I was wrong. Not being a believer, he was not capable of treating me with fairness and respect.

In his defense, however, I must say that I did something as a zealous young Christian that was neither right nor fair to him and his partners. I posted Biblical and religious words on our street signboard without their permission, trying to witness to the traffic, self-righteously feeling it was my duty and right to do so. I also closed down the lot on Sundays, determined to keep the Sabbath (which was not the Sabbath anyway), when they wanted it open. As well, I was offending some customers, as Tim and I would preach to them, and even try to convert them when they came to view homes.

It was only a matter of time before things came to a head. I really had no right to impose anything in their business against their wishes, unless God was leading me, and I don't believe He was. I only liked to think He was. Now I understand - there is a time and state of knowing things surely.

## Particle - **Divine Division in Mysterious Ways**

As I was struggling over Marilyn's and my relationship and what direction I should take, the Pauls called to tell me that Marilyn suddenly became seriously ill and was admitted to the Grace Hospital in St. James, Winnipeg.

I immediately flew to Winnipeg to join her mother. While at first they did not know what the problem was, they came to conclude she had equine encephalitis - Marilyn was seriously ill. Her head swelled beyond recognition, and she was delirious. They placed her in a padded room so she wouldn't hurt herself when she thrashed. Her mother was greatly anxious. We prayed for Marilyn, and I exhorted Mrs. Paul to believe, reminding her that we had asked the Lord to heal Marilyn, declaring that all was in God's hands.

Marilyn did recover, and in the weeks and months to follow, we corresponded by mail again, but it was never the same. I was perplexed by her changing moods, thoughts, and disagreement with me in various matters. I later suspected that her illness affected her mentally.

I was also concerned that while I had been dating Marilyn, she jokingly remarked to her parents that she had been out with “the apostle Paul” again. I had been serious about the Lord and could do little else but talk about Him and spiritual matters. She and her friends were not nearly as interested. I was not aware of her remarks when this was happening; I found out about them later when her mother laughingly told me (not in an unkind way). I finally realized I was not to pursue marriage with her.

#### **Update, March 2018, especially urgent for house pet owners:**

I had never made the connection between Marilyn Paul letting her poodle lick her mouth and her falling seriously ill with encephalitis. The medical establishment was stymied as to the cause of her illness. When I recently read David Wolfe’s article posted [here](#), I remembered and realized this could be the answer.

People are living dangerously in their naïve pleasures and don’t even know it. Today, especially, there’s a growing inordinate fondness for house pets.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” (Hosea 4:6 MKJV).

#### **Particle - Petty Pecuniary and Palate Problems**

One day at school, several students placed an order for burgers from McDonald’s. Janet Connor, Jack’s daughter, took our orders, collected the money, and went to pick up the take-out.

Because I was on a Weight Watcher’s diet and didn’t wish to offend it too much, I asked Janet to get me the biggest hamburger they had, but without fries, shake, onion rings, or anything else. I gave her a dollar, which in those days would have gotten a Big Mac with fair change returning. She returned with the smallest hamburger there was, which was likely about 39 cents, plain, no cheese - or change. Others had not given her enough for theirs, apparently, and she had no change to return.

Money and food matters were a problem to me, no matter how small; as a result, I was dismayed, but I said nothing more. An expression on my face could have betrayed my feelings, however, because I thought I witnessed Henry and Jack laughing about it as I walked near Henry’s office (they witnessed the event and knew the value of McDonald’s items). On the other hand, it could have been simply self-consciousness about my problems. Money and food problems were just two of many bondages that would need clearing up.

#### **Particle - The Mystical Connection of All Believers**

A wonderful revelation came to me one day. Jack Connor, Henry Blackaby, other students, and I were discussing how the Body of Christ works as a physical body, with all parts automatically working in unison, under the Head. Though we did not discuss this aspect I am about to describe, I realized with some amazement and excitement that those in Christ’s Body, wherever they may be

and whether they know one another or not, are working in unison and harmony with each other because their Head, Jesus Christ, is directing them.

The implications are significant. We are not talking fleshly activities or church works here, where everyone pitches in to have a potluck supper, bingo game, conference, church service, or “crusade.” We are talking about people around the world, people who do not know each other personally, in spirit doing what they are doing, their works in complete harmony with those of others in the Body who, in spirit and in truth, are serving the Lord, the Head, Who directs all.

What a rest there is in that truth! He is running the show, not we! The hand doesn’t operate independently of the Head, and the foot doesn’t operate independently of the hand, eye, heart, or lungs. All are one as the Head directs. I can know that I have brothers and sisters, wherever they may be, with whom I am one in Christ. I am benefiting from them and they from me. We are contributing every moment to one another.

I was so excited about this truth that Jack Connor asked me to share it on the local TV station where he had some allotted time. I was wondering if this was not going to be the start of something more public, but that was not to be for a long, long time.

### **Particle - Sheep without a Shepherd**

I look back and wish I had had a teacher or pastor who could have been direct and wise with me in so many matters. There is this prevalent error in nominal Christian churches: Pastors are reticent to counsel unless approached by their flock, and even then, their counsel can be ambiguous because they hesitate to offend.

Perhaps I was not about to listen, not being as teachable as necessary at this point, but I also did not even know to ask. I didn’t know a pastor should be available to guide me in all matters of life. It is up to the shepherd, and not the sheep, to determine needful courses of action, to take the initiative to lead, feed, and protect the sheep. Sheep are dumb, not knowing what they need - they don’t even know what they want! But I know the Lord provides what He wills when the time is right.

### **Particle - Last Call**

In the fall of 1973, on the highway heading north of Saskatoon, I recognized Barry Cloutier as we were driving by one another, and we stopped to meet. You will recall that Barry was a former business associate and friend from the Bay in Winnipeg, he had rented a room in our home for a time, and was the fellow with whom my department manager, Bob Richards, another fellow, and I had tried to start a music band. He was now a traveling salesman.

Barry was super-extraverted and unabashed at the worst of times. He could be crude, insulting, cutting, vulgar, witty, and merciless, perhaps worse than caustic comic Don Rickles. He partied at every opportunity and drank himself stupid. But he could also be polite, humorous, and friendly when he wanted to be, just like Rickles.

I tried to share my newfound faith with Barry, giving him several “Christian” books I had in the trunk of my car for just such an occasion. Some of them were the ones that came through customs from “Tremendous Charlie Jones” two years before (books I wouldn’t give to anyone today, but they had seeds of truth in them).

He took them, saying very little. I suspected that he despised what I was offering him. Not many years later I heard that Barry died of cancer.

#### Particle - **My First Home in Saskatoon**

I now needed a place to stay, but had a very limited budget. An elderly divorcee or widow, Vi Allen, had come to Henry Blackaby's church, offering a room with light housekeeping facilities in her home for a student at a very reasonable price. Henry and I drove there, investigated, and I accepted. My first home in Saskatoon was the 16<sup>th</sup> of my life.

#### Particle - **Some Motivation for My Seventeenth Home**

Vi had another live-in boarder with a room next to mine in her three-bedroom home. Lorne Hauser was a drug addict who had been in institutions, suffering shock treatments and other maltreatment at the hands of the medical establishment. He was also hooked on Valium, a prescribed medication claimed to be non-addictive at the time. Lorne was a derelict soul in his late forties or more.

One night, at about one or two in the morning, Lorne woke me by turning on my light. He was having a flashback or hallucination and talked about performing operations on people to make them well again. He had taken pillows and sofa cushions, laid them out in the living room, and cut them open, with stuffing strewn everywhere.

He was standing at my door with a butcher knife. I wondered if I was about to be his next patient. He was incoherent, saying things I didn't understand. I replied to him as if he was normal and there was nothing unusual going on. He retreated to his "work," and I retreated to prayer. I committed the whole situation into the Lord's hands, trusting Him to take care of me, and I went back to sleep...about two days later - just kidding - I really did go back to sleep.

It is amazing what trusting the Lord can do. He takes care, not only of our circumstances, but also of our attitudes toward them, which are even more important. ***And they say there is no God?*** When I told Henry what happened, he had a good laugh about it.

It was not long before I was not wanted at that house. Lorne complained about me for some reason, and Vi asked me to leave. I didn't need much persuasion!

#### Particle - **Provision Precisely Prepared**

One day, at my next home, I found that the rent of \$70 for my light housekeeping room was coming due, and I had no money. It happened to be due on my birthday, April 1. In the mail, I found a \$50 gift from my mother, and Marilyn Coles, a university student from the Bible school, came over for supper the night before and gave me \$20, which she said the Lord moved her to give me. She knew nothing about my due rent or lack of finances. There was the \$70.

***And they say there is no God?*** The Lord reigns over all things, unbelieving mothers, friends, birthdays, timing, mathematics... everything.

#### Particle - **"Ask Me, Not Man"**

Now the Lord taught me another lesson, and that was not to ask for, or expect, financial help or support from anyone at any time. I had asked one of my former friends and home-owning partner,

Dave Miller, if he would be willing to support me in Bible school. I was refused, fairly and understandably so.

When I first became a believer, my mother's cousin Aunt Hazel Chute of Dauphin expressed joy and thankfulness for it. She promised me that if I ever decided to go to Bible school or seminary, all I had to do was ask, and they would help me financially. She and her husband, Melburn, professed faith in Christ.

Months later, I asked them, and they didn't help me. They didn't offer any explanation other than not being able to afford it. I quickly learned that my trust needed to be in the Lord. I never asked for anything again, and as in the example with the rent money due, He always provided, proving Himself faithful in many tight situations.

### **Particle - A Spirit of Control**

As I got to know and observe Marilyn Coles, I noticed that she was one to organize, direct, supervise, and control. I saw her younger brother, Les, chafe at her requests and manipulations, as she compelled him to pick people up with his Datsun and be involved in church and social activities. She had only been at Faith Baptist for a couple of years, but already she was Henry Blackaby's "right hand man," organizing and directing many of the activities, like Sunday school.

"Right hand man" was closer to the reality than one may think. I noticed that Marilyn repeated Henry's phrases and mannerisms. As he was talking, he, in his peculiar way, would put forward his right forearm and bob his closed right hand up and down, with the end of his thumb pointed upward, and say things like, "Goodnight! (as in 'Good grief' or 'Goodness!') We need to (instead of the common 'must,' 'can,' or 'should') share (not 'speak' or 'declare' or 'say') some things (not 'this' or 'that,' specifically, or 'the facts')...."

While Bob Bye (another student) and a few others were somehow prone to copying Henry's personal idiosyncrasies, expressions, and mannerisms, Marilyn would mimic both his words and his motions constantly and robotically. It seemed like a personality cult to me. I wondered of them, "Don't you have personalities of your own? Must you borrow? Get a life, already!"

Back to the control (from the being controlled) aspect. We once had a Bible discussion with about five of us, and Marilyn was leading. A girl spoke and then I spoke. I don't know that I interrupted; I might have; I don't recall. Immediately Marilyn put her hand on me to prevent me from speaking so the girl could continue. Call it wisdom on her part or social etiquette for the girl's sake, I don't know, but Marilyn was always manipulative, not only with me, but with all. I didn't like it, but you wouldn't know it by what I did.

### **Particle - Not Jew-bilant**

I had a little insight into my new landlady, Resie Korber, a Jewish widow. We had talks and she bitterly expressed something she said many Jews would say: "We Jews are called 'the chosen people.' We say, 'Let God choose somebody else.'"

I had some knowledge of how Jews had suffered throughout history, and having lost my family and friends because of my faith, I could somewhat understand why she said that; however, I felt bad hearing it. I expected that, one day, Jews would be thankful for having been chosen of God.

## **Particle - Students at Christian Training Center**

Some of the students I recall at the Christian Training Center were Bob Bye, a proud and pretentious perfectionist, son of Bill and Grace Bye, pastor of a church in Edmonton; Randy Wilson from Kelowna, BC, someone we knew as a “health nut”; Al Niebergal of Vernon, BC, former addict, cleansed by God’s grace, I am told; Dan Fishley, a former addict, also cleansed by His grace, and his wife Dale - Dan was forever striving to have everyone understand things his way; Pat Martin, a long-haired Catholic hippie from the same area, the Okanagan Valley, who had done drugs, still drank, and though religious, was not repentant of his ways; Jean Johnson, daughter of Baptist pastor Bert Johnson of North Battleford, Saskatchewan - Bert was also an eccentric inventor; Larry Rempel, a troubled former Mennonite who became bitter and rebelled (I would see him in that state three years later at Randy Wilson’s wedding in Steinbach, Manitoba); Warren Mackenzie, a young zealot who had also been on drugs in the Okanagan Valley area - he would later despise me for something God did with me and others (more later); Lane Koster, son of Len and Ruth Koster (Len was an outreach minister at Faith Baptist); and his younger brother, Reid, troubled and argumentative, but more honest and real.

## **Particle - The Introduction to Organic Food**

Harry Roder of Concept-Therapy was one of the first people who alerted me to eating for health as well as pleasure. Fellow Bible student Randy Wilson was the first to play a dominant, lasting role in my life, making me more aware of pollution and corruption in the production, processing, and marketing of food, and of the consequent necessity to seriously exercise discretion and discipline in diet. In no uncertain terms, he encouraged me and others to eat organic. Though we gave him a hard time and initially did not take him seriously, his words eventually bore fruit.

## **Particle - People at Faith Baptist Church**

When I moved to Saskatoon, I started attending Henry Blackaby’s church - Faith Baptist Church. Here are those I recall: John Doucette (addicted to Coca-Cola) and wife Pat (newly married at the time); John Lobur, an elderly Ukrainian immigrant and widower who was quite lonely; Ludwig and Pat Teichgraber; June Schmidt, who died of cancer years later, we heard; Noreen Workman; Les Coles (Marilyn’s brother, who later married Noreen); Diane Dingwall, who later married Bill, a young American zealot on mission to “convert Canada to Christ”; Paul Johnson, older brother to Jean, who aspired to be a minister; Joe Pfeifer, who later married Jean Johnson; Gail Koster; Jan Green, a defensive, if not cynical, woman; her future husband, Richard Bellamy, who was greatly offended with my coercive witnessing approach with him (I don’t blame him); Mrs. Bates, the eldest person there; elder Jake Bergen and wife Ruby; their sons Gary and Greg Bergen; elder Ken Eagle, who was greatly offended over my sermon on sacrificing superfluous physical possessions and comforts to advance evangelism (more on that to come); elder Lawrence Ashton and wife Jean; Ken and June Fowler, and their children Rick and Debbie; Harry Strauss and Judy Linton, who later married; Wayne Andries, an enthusiastic, friendly, young prankster; Dan Coggins, of Catholic background; Larry Sveinbjornsen, whose parents we met in Humboldt or Wynyard, whom we tried to help, the father being alcoholic, Larry being mentally handicapped and on medications, and the mother, hurting and bitter, seeking help and not finding it - Henry spent hours and hours with Larry, to no apparent avail.

## **Particle - “I Know You Believe You Understand What You Think I Said...”**

One day I gave a lecture, and Harry Strauss, a newcomer at Faith Baptist, took to heart my call for uncompromising commitment to Jesus Christ, but it didn’t turn out as I had hoped or expected -



you will hear more of the direction he took. It would be one of the first examples of how people would take my words, but not my directions or intentions, which left me wondering what I was doing wrong.

Many have taken the Bible and made up diverse doctrines and religions; they have taken the apostle Paul's words and twisted them (2 Peter 3:15-16). So should it be surprising if people interpret my words in a way other than I intended? Birthing Ishmaels seems to be a fact of life!

#### Particle - **Fruits of Frustration**

Henry spent hours and hours counseling Larry Sveinbjornsen (a bachelor on medications) without any apparent success. I wondered how Henry justified the time and energies spent in this way.

Larry smoked and was violently defensive about it. One day, I barely mentioned smoking in a sermon, and Larry was incensed about it, complaining to Henry and desiring that nobody in the church ever have the opportunity or freedom to say anything against smoking again. At one point, he even physically attacked Marilyn, accusing her of stealing his cigarettes, which Henry had taken from him and handed to Marilyn.

Baptists and members of formal church structures can only think and move in externals. It was not his cigarettes, but Larry that needed removal, either by life-changing repentance or dismissal after sufficient effort and warning. We would hear more on Larry later.

#### Particle - **Bible School - School without the Bible**

To my chagrin, I came to realize that in this Bible school, I studied church history, denominational history, homiletics (the art of preaching), Sunday school and church administration, pastoral counseling, choir directing, evangelism, and Greek, but very little of the Bible. I wanted Bible! Nevertheless, God was dealing with me.

Here again, I came into conflict on some issues in the church, because I found discrepancies between what they practiced and taught, and what I found in the Bible. How little I knew the extent of the differences!

#### Particle - **First Sermon Foundational**

I recall my first sermon in homiletics class. As a zealous student, I had fervently prayed that God would give me a message, and He did. The message was that **it was not our circumstances, but our attitude towards our circumstances that was the issue**. It was about accepting our circumstances and giving thanks in everything. In effect, it was an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God, or if you will, the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I look back and marvel at what He gave me. It was not common for one at my stage of spiritual progression to think in terms of giving thanks to God for everything in all circumstances, acknowledging that He is over all things at all times. It was a sermon that fellow students appreciated, one that described a foundational principle of a walk by faith.

#### Particle - **Marilyn Manifests a Marvelous Might**

In the summer of 1974, Henry Blackaby sent Marilyn and me to minister to students in their mid to later teens at a youth retreat near Lloydminster, Alberta. Marilyn gave a prepared speech one day,

and the students were quite moved. I don't know if it was because of a demonstration she used during her speech by having the lights turned off for a few seconds to give the people an illustration of spiritual darkness, or because she had a rapport in spirit with them, as she often seemed to have with people of all ages, or both. I suspected she had an anointing of the Spirit of God, at least for the occasion. She manifested sincerity and care, if not compassion, which they thirstily received.

I was envious and tried to preach to the kids that which I had prepared, but all it seemed to do was stifle their spirits. It was doctrine rather than life, the letter without the spirit, the Bible without love, religion without reality.

Neither of us had the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Future developments and revelations would serve to teach me the difference between power of the flesh and power of the Spirit, and the difference between carnal, human, social, emotional love and godly, willful, spiritual love. At this time, I had little understanding or knowledge that these two opposites or separate kinds of love existed, or that one could be mistaken for the other.

#### Particle - **Down I Go Again**

The Southern Baptists believe that the local church is the Body of Christ. They teach that one is not really part of the Body of Christ universal unless committed to a local church congregation, sealed through total immersion in water. Seeing that I had been baptized in the Alliance Church and not theirs, they did not consider my baptism valid.

Because I was not baptized into "the Body of Christ," that is, the local Baptist church, I was not permitted to partake in the "Lord's Supper." Therefore, in order for me to be in true fellowship with them, I was required to be baptized again. According to them, it was not "again," because the Alliance Church did not believe in being baptized into a local congregation; besides, it was not Southern Baptist.

#### Particle - **Baptist Doctrine - Water Torture**

I did not think for a moment that my faith or relationship with Christ was dependent upon being rebaptized (or perhaps even being baptized once). I knew where I stood on the matter, but I submitted to their will, believing it was not an issue with the Lord either way.

On this matter, Marilyn Coles and I had a revelatory experience while working with the youth in Lloydminster. We were reading the Bible at 1 Corinthians 12 when we simultaneously realized the truth of the 13<sup>th</sup> verse which said:

**"For also by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, even all were made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13 MKJV).**

We suddenly realized, marveling, what I had suspected in spirit, that the Southern Baptist doctrine, suggesting that one is not part of the Body of Christ unless water baptized into a local church, was error. We were at that time given some subtle notice that our days as Baptists were numbered. This truth would divide me from the Baptists, and it would divide Marilyn from them as well, if she embraced it.

#### Particle - **A Primer on Denominational Division**

Opinion is what denominationalism and religious divisions are all about. One man disagrees with another on doctrine or on how things ought to be done, so he goes his way and starts his own church. “We believe in... whereas they believe....”

Henry Blackaby sent us out to “start a work” in Lanigan, Wynyard, and Humboldt, Saskatchewan. In one of those towns, as we began Bible studies, word got out to an evangelical fellow who was already there “starting a work,” reaching out to the youth of the community, which seemed predominantly Catholic. He requested a meeting with me and was quite upset.

“We are trying to reach these people for Christ,” he told me. “I have this youth center set up and kids are coming, but there isn’t enough work to split up between two or more churches. It’s going to hurt the cause of Christ. We are both working for the same Lord. Why should we compete? What are the people here going to think? It’ll confuse them. Start a work where there’s nothing happening. You’re going to spoil everything and waste all the work we’ve done.”

I believe the fellow was of a nondenominational organization, which, in many cases, is a denomination without a name, essentially the same as any other - structured, formal, and by concept and nature, necessarily self-righteous. (Is self-righteousness not the cause of these gatherings?) I saw his point, yet being a Southern Baptist, we had some doctrinal differences, which I was erroneously taught to be important enough to defend and promote. Therefore, I rejected his argument.

But this situation never left me entirely. There was something inherently wrong with the divisions in nominal Christianity and what we were doing to maintain them. Where was the unity of the original believers at Pentecost? They were one:

**“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things belonging to him was his own, but they had all things in common” (Acts 4:32 EMTV).**

**“Now all who believed were together, and they had all things in common, and they were selling their possessions and goods, and were dividing them among all, to the degree that anyone had a need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were sharing food with joy and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:44-47 EMTV).**

Particle - **How Can I Learn It All?**

I began experiencing a painful dilemma of a peculiar sort. I would walk into the Christian Training Center’s tiny library, with no more than maybe two thousand books at best. One of those was *Strong’s Systematic Theology*, a large, thick book in fine print, filled with doctrine and discourse.

I thought, “How in the world will I ever have enough time to wade through this one book alone, much less all these other books, and much less all the theological books in the world? Do I not need to search all things out to conclude what is right and true? I am not capable of such a thing! Is Calvin right? Is Luther right? Are any of these men right in all they teach? If so, which ones? Where shall I go? Who can I truly trust?” This consideration was very perplexing to me.

## **Particle - No Man to Help**

Nobody, not even the pastors, Henry or Jack, could help me, and nobody else seemed to mind too much. They seemed quite satisfied with the direction and schooling they were giving or getting there, apparently confident that they had the truth (or careless as to whether they had it). My problem, however, would be solved shortly and in a most marvelous way.

## **Particle - Okanagan Excursion**

Henry decided to visit some Baptist churches and hold meetings - have a "revival" of sorts - in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia. He took Randy Wilson, Marilyn Coles, and me through the Rockies in his car in the winter with bald tires - and I mean baby-bare-bottom bald. There were times we literally had to push the car to get it up a hill or two. We had originally thought of taking my new Challenger, but the gas would be more costly, and the car wasn't big enough to accommodate all of us comfortably.

We spent a week with a variety of people. One pastor was involved in interdenominational Charismatic meetings, which Henry and Southern Baptists considered delusion, if not anathema. The pastor tried so hard to be loving, patient, and joyful, but he did not venture to bear witness to Henry or the rest of us, likely expecting to be expelled if he did so.

We met with another family, the Carmacks, who were struggling with personal and spiritual issues, not having leadership. The father (Vern) was a bit of an independent thinker, the children were confused, and the grandmother was in a terrible state of bitterness.

She once taught Sunday school, and she tried hard to prove herself knowledgeable to us. She was quite critical and combative. Not a word came out of our mouths without her confronting us on our great lack of knowledge, knowledge she thought we were supposed to have, knowledge which gave her claim to superiority. I hoped I would never come to be that way.

One of Vern's boys, a young teen, became somewhat attached to me. I was sorry to leave him behind. We corresponded for a while thereafter, but soon lost contact.

## **Particle - Timothy Two**

On this trip, Henry proposed I be his personal disciple, as Timothy was to Paul. I was flattered to tears, having admiration for him. Knowing I was someone recent in his life, I wondered who I was, that I should receive such an honor. I looked forward with excitement to the prospect; however, my reaction seemed to disquiet him somewhat.

## **Particle - Banff Young Adults Sunday School**

I very much enjoyed the work with the Southern Baptists and relished the opportunities their work seemed to afford, particularly with Henry. They had a conference at Banff National Park in 1974, and Henry asked me to lead the Sunday school class for young adults, which I did. There were about a hundred attending. There was significant diversity of thought and perspective, but I was prepared, accustomed to spending hours on a lesson for classes at Faith Baptist, having enough material for a full day, never mind a half hour to an hour.

Some there were quite opinionated and not shy to express themselves, while others were quiet and withdrawn or disinterested. Somehow, I managed to control the aggressive and draw the reticent

to participate. I was greatly refreshed in that experience and received compliments for it, comments that were genuine and not the usual polite encouragements one often finds, especially in evangelical activities.

I mention this event to express that I had great hopes with Henry, enjoying every minute of it. I aspired to be a Christian ministerial star some day. Why, I even dreamed that I might become another Billy Graham, or greater!

### **Particle - An Uncle Confides**

Once when Uncle Fred Molnar drove me somewhere in Calgary, he pulled over, broke down, and cried, speaking of the insane jealousy his wife, Delores, had. He said he could go nowhere without her suspecting that he was eyeing some woman. One day she openly scolded him in church, claiming he was looking at another woman. He said he was so embarrassed he never wanted to go to church or anywhere else with his wife again. Who could blame him?

I could feel Fred's pain, and I felt badly. The only thing I could tell him at the time was to look to God, to have faith in Him. Apparently, Delores was consumed with jealousy and insecurity.

### **Particle - Challenger Challenged**

Al Niebergal was a rather legalistic fellow who criticized me as a believer for owning my sporty canary-yellow Dodge Challenger. I did not see it his way, especially when I knew the Lord had given me the car when I wasn't looking for it. But because I decided to work with the Southern Baptists and perhaps further my education to become a minister, I needed money and not the car, so I sold it.

After using it for a year, I sold it for nearly as much as I had paid for it, approximately \$4200 (I think I paid \$4350). I had lived "expensively at the bottom" with my old Chevy Impala, and "inexpensively at the top" with the new car I wanted - a principle God would speak to me about years later.

### **Particle - Buying Souls out of Hell**

Henry asked me to preach one evening while he was away. I chose to speak about commitment and sacrifice in light of (or darkness of) eternal damnation. I reasoned with the congregation that if people were really going to burn in Hell forever, how could we possibly sit around doing the things we did, enjoying the things we enjoyed, wasting immensely precious time with so much at stake?

I advised that we should be selling all, including the lamp on our end table, buying tracts, and handing them out at every spare moment. A \$50 lamp could buy a thousand tracts, I argued, and if but one person came to know the Lord by those tracts, would it not be worth it? I also pointed out the tragedy and consequence of not doing all we could to save a perishing world.

I saw a lot of glum faces. The elders were indignant, and a visiting young Southern Baptist from Texas, Robert Cannon, could not help but indirectly take several opportunities to severely criticize me for imposing "such guilt" on people. He was very upset.

When Henry heard about what happened, he was, as usual, in good humor about it. "You sure got them worked up!" he laughed. (I suspect he was rather frustrated that the congregation was generally passive about reaching out to win souls, and glad someone was stirring them.) What I said

was certainly true, at least in logic. Did the people really believe most were going to burn in Hell forever? They certainly did not act like it. Did I believe it? There would come a day when I knew what I believed.

### **Particle - Why No Unity of Heart and Soul?**

I preached one evening on the Beatitudes, when Henry was away. I prayed first that the Lord might give me good understanding on that passage. Then it came to me that there was a sequence; one thing led to another to another.

Fine to be poor in spirit, but it isn't enough - one has to mourn; fine to mourn, but it isn't enough - one has to be meek (open); fine to be meek, but it isn't enough - one has to hunger and thirst after righteousness. One must also have mercy and purity of heart. At this point, one is a peacemaker who will be persecuted.

After the service, Ken Fowler came to me and fairly bubbled over with enthusiasm. "I never heard the Beatitudes described that way before! It sure made sense to me!"

But when Henry heard of it, he was visibly annoyed. "I've never seen the Beatitudes that way," he objected with an apparent sense of disappointment. He didn't seem to agree, or at least, he felt left out and was not happy about it; he didn't elaborate. It didn't occur to me that I should perhaps run my planned sermon by him before I preached it. He hadn't said a word about that.

For one thing, he was away and that is why I was preaching - I was taking his place. For another, he never asked me to run anything by him, and third, I believed God gave me that understanding. Did I need to check it out with him even if he was around? It just did not occur to me. I was excited about what I had learned and was eager to share it with others.

The situation made me wonder. What if I was right about my understanding? What if Henry was wrong? Why were we not in agreement? How do individuals within a group unite in understanding and be in agreement on their doctrine? Where was God? Where was the Spirit of Truth, Who was supposed to lead us into all truth, even as Jesus promised?

### **Particle - A Hurt Boy**

I recall with regret a moment when working with the Baptists, having been sent by Henry to help Bill and Grace Bye in Vacation Bible School in Edmonton. A lady and I were gathering children in the city and bringing them to church for classes. Our front seat was full of kids sitting beside us and in my lap.

One boy of about eight years (I think his name was Jeremy) was very hyper, jumping around as we were driving. I tried to calm him, but words failed, so I secretly grabbed him by the sides of his rib cage and squeezed his flesh. He immediately quieted down, though he did not look at me or acknowledge in any way what I had done.

While I did not injure him, I certainly gave him some discomfort. I am sorry for that. Perhaps it was the right thing to do at the time, but I feel I broke an unspoken trust and did damage to his soul, in the Name of God, that he might carry for the rest of his days. I simply pray that God will take care of him and the spiritual injury I caused.

I am guilty of so many travesties, I can't count them, and they have all pained me. Why, oh why, I ask, did I do, speak or think such things? Why can't we realize in advance the implications and potential consequences of our actions, be right and good and a blessing to all at all times, and not react as we do in so many situations?

Regret is one of my greatest regrets.

#### Particle - **Deceptive Appearances**

Henry and Jack decided they wanted a camp in the woods west of Prince Albert, around Choiceland, and called for volunteers for tree felling and woodcutting to build a log structure. Several of us offered to go.

Five or so of us arrived to do the work of trimming large spruce trees by axe. Robert Cannon lent us his new tent trailer, and the church provided food supplies. Robert was returning to the city, while the rest of us would remain for the week.

We immediately began work. I was in decent shape, though I did not look like it. I was smaller and leaner than average, but I was at my age level in the Royal Canadian Air Force 5BX exercise program (top of Chart 4). One of the fellows, Gary Bergen, was somewhat muscular, having done some bodybuilding, but he soon ran out of stamina after only a couple of hours, while the rest of us kept going. Gary sat more than worked. I got annoyed and started scolding him for not doing his share. He remained silent and looked rather strangely at me when I got after him.

Jack Connor later told me Gary had boasted days before to everyone that I would not last a day in the bush. He was quite critical, I was told, of my capabilities as a potential woodcutter. I had known absolutely nothing of this. In light of these circumstances wherein I was getting after Gary, Jack marveled and exclaimed, "You mean you didn't know?" I said I had no idea. He had a good laugh about it.

#### *And they say there is no God?*

#### Particle - **A Fast Friend**

A Baptist student worker from Texas, Don Pittman, and I were the only ones who remained for the week, with food enough for six. With double-bladed axes, we worked hard every day. The mosquitoes were so plentiful, we wondered if one blade was for the wood and the other was to cover our backs from mosquitoes on the upswing. I marveled at Jack Connor as he worked with us for a while on the first day. He would be covered with mosquitoes and paid no attention to them whatsoever.

Bears, sometimes as many as three or four, came to our tent trailer in the night, smelling our food supply and gently disturbing the trailer. Sometimes during the day, they came to the area and sniffed around. A Métis who worked there in the bush would holler and chase them away, then turn to us with a toothless grin, as though he had just done something naughty or silly.

I appreciated Don Pittman. In a short time, we had come to share much together. I confided to him that Marilyn Coles was chasing after me, subtly twisting my arm to marry her. I said it would never happen. A few months later, I heard that Don had a good laugh about it back in Texas. Can you guess why?

When we returned from the bush to Saskatoon, Don had to leave for home. We parted in sadness. I tried contacting Don months later, but because of what had happened to me spiritually by that point, he had no heart to be in touch with me. I and a few others were soon to be written off by the Southern Baptists as heretics.

#### **Particle - A Joyful Piece of News Indeed**

Concerning my new life in Christ, nobody believed or received me in our family except for Mary Kozak and Delores and Fred Molnar, though I had testified to many. But now came another! Archie called me saying he had found the Lord! I was very excited, and so was he.

What a change from the cynical, hardened antiChrist person I knew and whom I had tried to talk to about the Lord! The last time I had seen Archie and Cathie was when they had passed through Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, on their way to Calgary, Alberta, from Toronto, Ontario, after their wedding. They were closed and hard. Now they were in Calgary and we decided to pay them a visit.

We first visited Marilyn's mother, Laura, and her husband, Les, in northwest Calgary. While there, we called Archie and got directions to their place. It was really easy to get there - they were right across the street! Let some statistician figure the odds out on that one! Archie and Cathie immediately developed a close relationship with Les and Laura.

#### ***And they say there is no God?***

#### **Particle - Archie's Conversion to Christ**

Now, Archie told us his story. It was a rather strange event. He had gone to see *The Exorcist* and was terribly frightened by it, so much so that he had nightmares, couldn't sleep, and was fearful of demons.

One day, shortly after seeing the movie, he and Cathie were driving on a road from Fred Molnar's acreage just outside of Calgary (Delores was witnessing to them of the Lord). He was contemplating making a decision to commit himself to God. Suddenly, he said, the Lord took over control of his car and his life. He cried like a baby by the side of the road and everything changed. He was overjoyed, Cathie was supportive, vices were put away, their lifestyle changed, and good habits replaced the bad.

#### **Particle - Weary of Works**

Some of us, speaking now particularly of Marilyn and me, worked hard with the church. Southern Baptists would joke about how busy they could be. Marilyn and I traveled to Winnipeg in 1974 to attend Gerry McClintock's wedding, and I felt so relieved to get away and be free of the busy-ness. Tactfully, I discovered, to my surprise, that Marilyn felt the same way. Why was I surprised? She had applied herself with great devotion, enthusiasm, and energy, as Henry's dedicated "right hand man." But she also needed a break, and she enjoyed it.

#### **Particle - False Faith Produces Confusion**

What confusion false professors of faith bring into the mix! My former drinking buddy Gerry McClintock married a Pentecostal girl, Sam, from Calvary Temple in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She had no faith in Christ, though she professed to be a Christian. There I was, a young and ignorant



convert, caught in a confusing situation. Gerry, an unbeliever, was my friend, and he was now married to an alleged believer who was zealous that I keep in touch with Gerry for faith's sake (which I desired to do), yet she was not living a life of faith herself.

I had more respect for Gerry, who was not professing faith, than for her. Sam was very worldly; she wore fashionable, skimpy dresses and her thoughts, conduct, and language were anything but Christian. How is it she married Gerry, an unbeliever, and if she was a believer, why would Gerry marry her?

Being slow to comprehend, I didn't know what to make of it or what to do. If Sam had either true faith or no professed faith at all, it would have been better than what was. I knew I had to go on without either of them because neither believed or was called to walk the path of truth with me.

### **Particle - A Sad Misunderstanding**

When I became a believer, I had to go my way, and my former friends couldn't understand my religious pushiness (not that it was right). Gerry didn't understand what was happening and was frustrated with me. He thought I had dumped him as a friend, which wasn't true. I tried to tell him otherwise, but he didn't believe me. Over the years, I touched base with him several times, but never he with me.

### **Particle - The Croteaus' Creeping Crisis**

George Croteau was one of Marilyn's university friends. He and Gerry, another university student, were engaged, then married. Gerry was quite taken with George, and they seemed to be a happy couple.

We visited them after they married and found they had a fixation and scheme to save money on food. They were down to pennies a day in food costs and boasted about it. But what a terrible diet! There was no mind paid to nutrition value. We would see and hear more of them and witness some sad developments.

### **Particle - The Power of Drugs**

I remember my first attempt to work with drug addicts, and that in a Christian context. I brought Bill Duckworth, a young fellow, off the street into the church one evening to work with him. He was high. His father was an alcoholic, though he had stopped drinking. In days to come, we got to meet the family, which was devastated.

For a short while, things looked promising with Bill, as is not uncommon, but he soon fell back to his drugs. I wondered at the power of addiction and tyranny of drugs and unbelief in such people, and I wondered at our powerlessness to help them. Where was God in all this? Why couldn't we reach such people?

### **Particle - A Tormented Woman**

Once when I was preaching against sin, a woman living on social assistance rushed forward, screaming out of fear and torment, and cried out for forgiveness. I stopped for a few moments, while Marilyn took her to a side room to deal with her, then I resumed preaching.

Formality had its way. Not having the Spirit of God, and without understanding, I thought I should continue with “the service” (it may or may not have been the right thing to do). We really didn’t know what to do with her, but in retrospect, I see that she needed deliverance from guilt and fear, if not devils. Marilyn calmed her down after some time, counseling her and praying with her, and the woman went her way after the church service.

I knew other such persons, even third generational welfare people, their parents and grandparents having lived on social assistance. Many smoked, drank, took drugs, and could not function in society. We got nowhere with them.

While we seemed to fail in assisting them, I have learned that there is a time, place, and purpose for every person. It was not their time. God does indeed “visit the iniquity of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him,” as His Law declares. Jesus also said that those in prison would pay every last penny of debt before being released. These were prisoners indeed.

#### Particle - **Seed of the Sabbath**

While doing some outreach work in downtown Saskatoon, we met a teenage fellow and his girlfriend, Tim and Donna, former addicts, who came to profess faith in Christ, not by us but by others. In their search for fellowship, they came to our church. They had also visited other churches, and they had attended an evangelistic meeting held by Seventh Day Adventists, wherein the keeping of the Sabbath was preached (as usual), which provoked the young couple to pursue the subject.

In a conversation with them, Tim asked me, “So why do you keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath?” My reply was a common one: “It is not that we believe Sunday must be **the** day, but there should be a day of rest set aside each week. Because of the way things are in the world, with businesses closed on Sundays, and weekends free for many people, we keep Sunday. It is a matter of convenience.”

“Oh, convenience! Convenience, eh?” (He was obviously getting a bit high and mighty as a new convert at age 17 or so, likely having heard similar sarcastic rejoinders from the Seventh Day Adventists.) “So, let’s get this straight...you don’t keep the day of the week God commanded to keep. You keep a day that is convenient to you! Hmmm! Yes, I see!”

While I was a bit annoyed with his smart aleck attitude, the thoughts he expressed never left me. One day they would bear fruit.

#### Particle - **A Ukrainian Call**

Henry Blackaby asked me to preach one evening, and the event was posted in the Saskatoon newspaper. James Hominuke, a Ukrainian Baptist minister who ran a Ukrainian Bible printing press saw my Ukrainian name and came to hear me. After the meeting, he asked me to consider outreach to Ukrainians. We met at his shop, he showed us his printing operation and again asked me to join him in the work.

I would have to learn the Ukrainian language, and I wondered if this was not my calling and responsibility as a Ukrainian under God. I came to the conclusion, however, that it was not, and I declined.

#### Particle - **A Call from Far Away**

One memorable night, a neighboring Baptist pastor, Bill McLeod, came to preach. Henry had asked him to fill in for him. It seems that Bill had been involved in some revival meetings that resulted in humbling and repentance among many partakers. He spoke of how he, a proud man, ended up feeling about two feet tall (motioning with his hand), and how God changed his life. Something in what he was saying and how he was saying it made me feel a longing for more, as though we were really missing out on something.

I saw a contrast between Henry's proud preaching and Bill's appeal to simplicity and humility. I wanted what Mr. McLeod described. While his message didn't seem to have an effect on anyone else at Faith Baptist, it did have an effect on me. I think that in its own quiet, indiscernible way, his message served as a catalyst for my severance from the spiritual dimension I was in at Faith Baptist.

### Particle - Comfort and Consideration at My Eighteenth Home

I eventually left Mrs. Korber and found a light housekeeping basement suite closer to the Christian Training Center, the eighteenth home of my life. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Toews, who were Mennonites, were the owners.

Mrs. Toews occasionally brought me a hot meal, without warning, sometimes just after I had finished eating my bachelor preparations. Perhaps she saw that I was a Bible student, living a modest life, and she wanted to help. Perhaps she saw my scarcely-stocked cupboards of Kraft dinners and canned mackerel, and my near-empty fridge with three-for-a-dollar McCain's frozen cream pies, frozen liver, turnips, and salad vegetables. I thanked Mrs. Toews and consumed her kind offerings even if I had just eaten.

When commending her once, she said to me in her German accent, "Oh, I hef not much fruit, only lots uf leafs." I interpreted her words to be those expressing humility and thought it good. I would later wish she hadn't said that.

### Particle - Homes of My Life Thus Far

Why do I count all my past homes? Am I proud of my transiency? Am I egotistic? Do I have this thing about counting things (I certainly have that!)? Perhaps you have an answer; I don't.

The **first** was home on the farm; **second**, Auntie and Uncle Atamanchuk's; **third**, home on the farm again; **fourth**, in town at 807 Main St. South in Dauphin; **fifth**, St. Vladimir's College in Roblin for ten months; **sixth**, home again at 807 Main; **seventh**, 1993 Elgin Avenue, Winnipeg, with the Palmers; **eighth**, 742 McDermot Avenue in Wpg, with the Millers; **ninth**, 122 Home Street, Wpg, with Lydia Kisel; **tenth**, Fawcett Avenue, Wpg; **eleventh**, the Martello Apartments on Broadway, Wpg; **twelfth**, Bannatyne Avenue, Wpg, with Rick Steinke's relatives; **thirteenth**, 4810 Eldridge Avenue, Charleswood (first home owned, during which time I had my skiing accident); **fourteenth**, 20<sup>th</sup> St. S. in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, with the Garneaus, who saved me in my acute appendicitis bout; **fifteenth**, Mrs. Kinsella's basement suite in PA; **sixteenth**, Vi Allen's in Saskatoon, from where I was evicted; **seventeenth**, Resie Korber's in Saskatoon; **eighteenth**, Toews residence in Saskatoon.

There are more homes to come.

## Particle - All in the Ears of the Hearer

One day Mrs. Toews suddenly fell ill and died. At the Mennonite evangelical funeral, people were encouraged to testify. Several stood up to speak about how Mrs. Toews was a good Christian woman. Finally, I thought I would testify to the humility I thought to have witnessed of her, and I related what she had said to me ("lots of leafs, but not much fruit"). It went over like a lead balloon. There was dead silence in the room.

It then occurred to me that they took it not as a testimony of her humility, but one of falling short of her duty in the faith, and therefore not appropriate in her memory. I'm really not sure what they were thinking.

But I realized that her testimony was not appropriate. If we are serving the Lord, there ought to be acceptable fruit; otherwise, as Christians, we ought to be repenting, and not just talking or joking about how poorly we do. What kind of reflection is that on our Savior?

It is one thing to count ourselves unworthy, but quite another to count ourselves lacking in fruit. The Lord said that the fruitless, as dead branches, would be taken away and burned. Not that we should necessarily feel confident about our fruit-bearing, as though we accomplished anything in our power.

## Particle - Is Insurance Necessary?

One of the first things I instinctively knew when becoming a believer in Christ was that there was no need for insurance, be it for life or house or anything else. I had purchased a whole life insurance policy when I was at the Bay, and I discovered it was not to my advantage - that it was, quite frankly, a rip-off. **They've done their math.**

Are insurance companies truly there for safety and wellbeing? To answer that question, let's ask another: Would they be there if there was no profit in it for them? Of course they are there for their profit, and no small profit at that. They are professional money handlers, experts at making investments and turning profits. **They've done their math.** Those who serve mammon are not there to serve God or neighbor in the pure way of His Kingdom.

Having no other assets or income (the Southern Baptists not providing pay for "the great work" we did for them - like most, if not all, other churches), I cashed in my life insurance. Yes, I took a beating; that is how life insurance works - cash in prematurely and you lose most of what you have invested. **They ensure themselves profitable use of the math.**

I knew, however, that I had made a mistake purchasing insurance in the first place. I wanted out, needed out, and was glad to get out. I knew that if I walked with God, He would be my faithful Provider and Protector. He would prove to be that, and much more. **He made math!**

## Particle - Christian Insurance Brokers

Christian life insurance brokers justify their occupation with words the apostle Paul wrote to his disciple, Timothy:

**"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially his family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8).**

They postulate, "What if you suddenly die? Who will take care of your wife and kids? Wouldn't it be awful to leave them in such a financial crisis? You need to think of them; you need to think ahead."

They go on to say, in so many words, "We think everything will go on as it does, but there are no guarantees in life. We need to make preparations and allowances for the unforeseen."

No guarantees? Does this not apply to insurance companies as well? Just who do they think they are - God? Would I not be placing my trust in them by buying insurance, hoping they will still be there 50 years from now to pay up, if they were capable or willing?

Laws change, companies, governments, and countries change - the whole world changes all the time, especially in this day. So how is it I should have more confidence in men than in the One Who never changes and is ever faithful? The Scriptures on these matters are clear to me:

**"Some rely on chariots and others on horses, but we will boast in the Name of the LORD our God. They will sink to their knees and fall, but we will rise and stand firm" (Psalms 20:7-8).**

Provided we have an insurance policy?

**"For You are He Who took Me out of the womb, causing Me to trust while on My mother's breasts" (Psalms 22:9).**

**"I was cast on You from the womb; You are My God from My mother's belly. Be not far from Me; for trouble is near, for there is none to help" (Psalms 22:10-11).**

None to help? Not even an insurance agent?

**"Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust and does not turn to the proud, or to those who turn aside to a lie" (Psalms 40:4).**

Are not those who think to offer guarantees presumptuous? Is it not a lie to promise, not knowing the end of anything or even the beginning for that matter? What is the beginning? Is it not to profit, to take advantage of fear and insecurity? Are insurance policies an act of faith? Only if directed by God, and He has never directed me, or anyone else I know, in this way.

Here is what the Lord has assured me, without an insurance policy:

**"I have been young, and am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread" (Psalms 37:25).**

Were they secure because they all had insurance policies, or was it regardless? Must I have magnificent mammon managers magnanimously manipulating money for me? I don't think so. As you will see, I will lapse into unbelief on this matter later, but recover.

#### **Particle - A Cousin Contrary to Christ**

We visited Ted Hafichuk and his wife Donna in Saskatoon once. I recall trying to speak to Ted about the Lord, but he was so opposed, one could almost see the hair stand on his neck at the mere mention of Jesus Christ. He spoke of being forced to go to church as a Catholic kid, hating the

unpleasant elements, just as I had. I tried to tell him there was a world of difference between the false and the real, but he would not listen. Time would dramatically demonstrate the dire consequences of his adamant choice.

#### Particle - Friend Friesen's Folly and Fruits

In a visit with Tim Friesen a year or more after I left him at Homes Canada, I discovered he fell victim to an unwise business move by Homes Canada. Bob Vail also related to me what happened. Bob's partner, Terry Johnston, wanted to set up a sales lot in his hometown of Chilliwack, BC to show off to his family and friends that he had succeeded in life. Tim and a single Rosicrucian saleswoman working in Prince Albert were asked to transfer and establish the new lot.

Sales were poor, and Tim told me he earned next to nothing for commissions. He did not tell me something else Bob told me, however. Tim fell into adultery with the saleswoman.

It was not without a measure of satisfaction that Bob related this to me, seeing Tim professed Christ, and Bob and Terry were quite cynical of Christian faith.

Tim did tell me something that slightly profited me financially. He knew that Homes Canada was supposed to pay me deductions when I left the company the year before, which they had not done. I wrote Bob and asked for what was coming to me. They sent me a check for nearly \$1,000 that, at the time, was quite handy.

Tim had resented me and sided with Bob and Terry in their unjust and humiliating dismissal of me, though Tim and I were supposed to be brothers in Christ. He received the reward of hypocrites.

I would see Tim again, and things would not be much better for him.

#### Particle - The Role of Women in Churches

An issue came up one day wherein I was forced to take a stand, and this stand was opposite to Henry's. A fellow student, Lane Koster, son of Len and Ruth, brought some verses to me - 1 Timothy 2:11-15:

**"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I do not allow a woman to teach, or to exercise authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. But she will be kept safe through childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with sensibleness."**

He had brought up these verses because there was an election happening in the Baptist Student Union, and women were running for President and Director. I took Lane's verses from there and a lively debate ensued. Expecting Lane to stand with me in the plainspoken directive of the Scripture, I was disappointed. Nobody stood with me but one who had something to lose, the woman holding the Director position, Marilyn Coles.

#### Particle - Our Diverging Paths

Henry was quite displeased with me, firstly because I was taking a stance with which he did not agree and one that created controversy, which he did not relish. I also did not consult with him on

the matter, because I knew what the Scriptures taught and he chose the opposite position, even having groomed Marilyn for leadership in the Baptist Student Union.

It seemed I was beginning, however unintentionally, to sway his zealous worker and helper away from him. I was very sorry to see all this happen, because I admired Henry. I wanted to be a part of his ministry and be his “Timothy,” as he had proposed. But most of all, I desired that we all walk in the truth and counsel of Scripture. It wasn’t happening. The writing was on the wall.

#### Particle - **Preparation for the Higher**

Just after that time of contention, I entered into a period of a few months of soul-searching and conviction of subtle sins, like being critical of others. I went to many, confessing and apologizing. I was somewhat experiencing the same kind of spiritual ordeal I had undergone before my conversion; however, this time it was on another level. I had no idea I was experiencing the birth pangs leading to a higher dimension.

#### Particle - **Open Confessions Not Always Wise**

I confessed a critical attitude to several. While some accepted my confession and apology graciously, I saw the countenance and attitude change with others, Henry included. I saw resentment that was not there before my confession. Les Nelson was another person I remember having a changed countenance toward me immediately, from friendliness to resentment.

I don’t think it necessarily wise to confess secret sins to others. Confess to God, repent, and go from there. Nevertheless, those confessed to are all tried, aren’t they? Will they forgive and love, as they ought, or is theirs a vain profession of faith?

#### Particle - **The Call of Consecration**

God was calling me up higher. It occurred to me that everyone wanted God for a friend, always needing, wanting, and asking Him for something. How many prayers are simply selfish requests and focused, not on God, but on self! But it occurred to me that God wanted friends. Abraham was known as the friend of God. I concluded that I also wanted to be God’s friend, seeking Him and being here for His sake, and not my own. Some Scriptures were sinking deep into my soul, finding permanent residence:

**“I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order to prove by you what is that good and pleasing and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1-2 MKJV).**

**“For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8 MKJV).**

**“But whatever things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. But no, rather, I also count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whose sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them to be dung, so that I may win Christ and be found in Him; not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death; if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead” (Philippians 3:7-11 MKJV).**

**“I have been crucified with Christ, and I live; yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And that life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith toward the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself on my behalf” (Galatians 2:20 MKJV).**

I wanted to be God’s friend. I wanted His perfect will.

#### **Particle - Archie, A Fish out of Water**

I persuaded Archie and Cathie to move to Saskatoon and attend the Bible school. They came in the fall of 1974, but they seemed uncomfortable with it all. They had financial difficulties, and they did not seem a whole lot interested in the subject matter. They also seemed out of synch with the rest of the people, and Marilyn and I were finding ourselves in conflict with them as well.

Another curious thing happened, too. Archie told me of some people in Calgary who talked to him about being filled with the Spirit and having gifts. He said someone laid hands on him, but I don’t recall if he said anything happened, and there was no indication that anything had. Being the budding Baptist, I cautioned him against such a thing, though I wondered and suspected there might be something to it.

#### **Particle - The Bait Is Set**

I met my future wife at the school - Marilyn Coles. She and I had been teamed up on several occasions to do church work in the year before we married. During this time, I felt pressured to marry her, though it was very subtle. Was it only my perception? Was God directing us? If pressured, was it good or bad, warranted or unwarranted?

One day Marilyn was attending a Baptist Student Union conference in Seattle, Washington and invited me to come. We passed through Vancouver, BC, and decided to visit my Aunt Polly, her son, Gary Guraliuk, his wife, Marilyn, and their children.

A fateful thing happened. Arlie Peters, a former attendant of Faith Baptist Church in Saskatoon and Marilyn’s friend, hearing we were in his city, came by with flowers and proposed to her. She came crying to me, confiding that she didn’t know what to do. She wanted to know where she stood with me.

#### **Particle - Is God or Man Joining Us Together?**

I had felt pressure from the Southern Baptists to be a married man. Their conviction was that a man could not be a truly effective minister without an involved, supportive wife by his side. They had no valid answer for the apostle Paul’s example or his words declaring he preferred that all could have his gift of celibacy.



I desired to be as Paul, single and wholly committed to the Lord. Several people, however, Charlie Baker, Jan from Texas, and others, were indirectly, passively persuading me to marry. I also felt that Marilyn was twisting my arm, though she has solemnly declared otherwise. We had been unintentionally teamed up together for many activities, and I missed her when she was away. She seemed the only sober, sincere one who was serious about God. Was her desire to marry me of God?

#### Particle - **Drinking from a Common Goblet**

We had never discussed marriage, although Marilyn told me later that the Lord told her I would be her husband. She also had a dream wherein we were outside some city walls and she, sitting on my left, was giving me to drink out of a goblet we shared. As I was drinking, I held her hand, which held the goblet.

#### Particle - **Hook, Line, and Sinker**

While Marilyn hadn't told me what she received from the Lord, I felt I needed to make a decision. I wanted to cease the suspense and see her at peace. I asked Marilyn to marry me, and she accepted. Furthermore, I felt (and she agreed) that we should marry as soon as possible, setting the date for a month later - November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1974.

Many had a good laugh about the sudden news, hearing how it happened, particularly Don Pittman, since I had once passionately confided to him that it never would.

We drove to Marilyn's father's ranch in the hills south of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. There I asked John Coles for his daughter. I had been there once or twice before as Marilyn's guest.

He said, "Take good care of her. A good wife is hard to find." I suppose he spoke with some hard experience. Marilyn's mother had left him when Marilyn was twelve and her brother ten. He was right in what he said, and I am chagrined to say that I have not taken care of her nearly as well as it seems to me I should have.

#### Particle - **Ominous Words**

"He'll be good for her," Les Coles, Marilyn's brother, said of me after we announced our engagement. This was during an incident when I resisted Marilyn's efforts to manipulate me somehow. I had but a hint of an idea as to what Les meant, and I thought I heard a touch of bitterness in his words. While I did not understand, the time would come when I would understand very well.

#### Particle - **Why Did I Marry?**

I am now rather reluctant to confess other, carnal motivations for marrying. I am no different from any other man, perhaps worse, in that I have allowed myself to be guided by base passions when, as a Christian, I should have known better. Marilyn once or twice wore a low-cut dress, which stirred my desire. She also baked a moist and tasty carrot cake with cream cheese icing. I am ashamed to admit such things, yet these things were there. I also know, however, the meaning of these words:

**“A man may make designs for his way, but the Lord is the guide of his steps” (Proverbs 16:9 BBE).**

There’s another saying: “The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach!” Clever and wise, whoever wrote that one.

Was it wrong for her to wear a low-cut dress? According to the world, no; according to Biblical principles and Christian etiquette, yes. Was it wrong for her to bake a good cake? No. While she no longer does the former, she still does the latter - uh, latter.

The issue is not in externals, however, but in our attitude towards them. Was I trapped by my own lusts? It could be. Yet I know God determined the course, which He would soon confirm in miraculous and marvelous ways.

### **Particle - Having Children Impossible**

When getting medical examinations for marriage, the doctor told us that Marilyn would not be able to have children because of a hormonal imbalance. This would obviously be a problem to those aspiring to have a family, but we weren’t concerned. My sole desire was to serve God; all else was optional. The doctor would prove to be right - for many years.

### **Particle - Have Your Cake or Eat It**

Though I had grown attached to Marilyn while we were working in the church, my preference was to remain single. As it happened, we married. Before we committed ourselves to each other, however, I told Marilyn that I wanted our marriage to be different from others in this respect: I didn’t want her to expect a normal marital relationship. My desire was that we would each be, first and foremost, serving the Lord together. She readily agreed.

Did she understand? Would that be suitable to her indefinitely? Was it a “Yeah, yeah, I know...” or a “Yes, I understand and solemnly agree,” yet not knowing what she was getting herself into?

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians of trouble in the flesh in marrying, saying that the husband would seek to please the wife, and the wife would seek to please the husband. He recommended that, if possible, one ought to remain single so that he or she might serve the Lord with full devotion.

Marilyn and I made that agreement explicitly. I hoped we could marry and serve the Lord, too. For years, even decades, I thought we were doing just that. We would find out differently - the Word of God cannot be broken. I would discover that I could not eat my carrot cake and have it, too.

### **Particle - Our Wedding**

We were married the last day of November, 1974, 21 months after my conversion, which was near the end of February, 1973. Marilyn had come to faith in June of 1971, nearly two years earlier than I. For her, our wedding was **3½ years** after her conversion, twice as long as it was for me.

All those at Faith Baptist Church graciously participated and helped with a modest wedding festivity. I wished to have a casual wedding, and it was not as I would have had it. Powerful forces are ever at work to press formality. For \$25, we rented the Hudson Bay Park Baptist Church where there was more room and better facilities than at Faith Baptist to accommodate our guests.

We wrote vows in our own words, and I tried not to be conventional, yet succumbed to the pressures of custom and tradition from every direction. Today, I do not believe in vows of any kind, having learned that only God can ensure anything.

Marilyn borrowed a wedding gown from her first Christian friend and fellow student, Gladys Goertzen, and I picked up a good suit at a garage sale for \$15 and had it altered for another \$15. We let the rest of the wedding party get what they liked.

We hired a photographer, a cousin to Judy Linton, at Judy's recommendation. I asked her to take pictures that would capture people in natural circumstances, not in deliberate or formal poses. She did not honor my request and charged us about double the expected price. Judy wasn't pleased with that. Neither were we, especially because I had a problem with money matters anyway.

Henry performed the ceremony. He was somewhat perplexed because we had not gone to him for premarital counseling. Who knew? Why didn't he tell us we should do so? Marilyn and I had no idea. Would we have listened to him if he had told us? I doubt it very much.

Marilyn's brother Les and my brother Archie were best men, Sheila Klein (Marilyn's half sister) and Cathie, Archie's wife, were bridesmaids. My younger brothers Bob and David, who lived in Dauphin, ushered. I was somewhat annoyed with David because he was a bit inebriated. He knew we did not want alcohol in our midst. I almost considered denying him the honor of being our usher, but I let it go. It was not a time for strife and rebuke. I think he was nervous in a formal gathering of strangers.

Why did we choose to have our earthly brothers and sisters as best men and bridesmaids, and my earthly brother for an usher at our Baptist wedding, though he was not a believer? At least, Archie, Cathie, and Les did profess faith in Christ. In any case, God was about to change our relationships dramatically.

#### Particle - **Family Wedding Guests**

My sister Barb and her husband Ron, my father and mother, and my Uncle Fred and Aunt Mary Prestayko came from Dauphin. They sat in front seats in great gloom throughout the ceremony, displeased that I was not marrying in the Catholic Church, and that I had opted for a Christian wedding, or that we had married without their direct participation and arrangement. Throughout the evening, my physical family stuck to themselves and did not mingle with our church family, which was to be expected, though some in the church tried to make gestures of hospitality.

I had not honored my parents as they would expect. Was I right or wrong? All I know is that it happened as it did, and Marilyn and I were not at all inclined to be subjected to a great nonChristian, Ukrainian wedding with all its revelry. I also believed that if they held a wedding festivity for us, it would not be enough for them unless we had a Catholic ceremony, the thought of which I found utterly unacceptable before God.

We were granted time to declare to all what God had done for us. Being emotional, I cried when testifying. Following some advice from Henry, I tried to credit my parents for some religious upbringing, and it backfired, at least with my sister, Barb. She, as usual in her mysterious bitterness toward me, was able to find fault with that particular segment of what I said.

Lois, my mother's sister and wife to Howard Benson, was there. Lois is the one with whom I held a bet that whoever married first would owe the other a dollar - she married first (I don't know that I ever saw the dollar). Fred and Delores Molnar also came; Delores professed faith in Christ, while it seemed Fred went along with it. I was never sure where he stood - was his faith real, one that gave him a quiet confidence, or was his silence an indication he had no personal relationship with God?

Marilyn's father, John Coles, was there from Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, with his brother Walter, as were Marilyn's mother's brother and wife, Charles and Nancy Moeller. Her mother Laura also came, but she didn't come with her second husband, Les Klein. If their marriage was justified, why not? Both John Coles and Laura Klein professed faith in Christ, Marilyn having "led them to the Lord."

### **Particle - The World Loves Its Own**

Dave Miller flew in with a friend from Winnipeg to honor our wedding. Later, when he married, he didn't invite me; he told me his was very small, but I surmised he didn't want a zealous believer at his wedding. Gerry McClintock didn't make it, but he came to the reception in Dauphin the following week, where Dave again came.

Gerry was upset with me at the Dauphin reception because my father was upset because of the way I was conducting myself there as a believer. I wasn't flowing with the crowd, drinking and being as I once was. I was a bit perplexed that Gerry should side with my father, though not surprised, since they were unbelievers. I now guess that Dad had complained to him confidentially about me and influenced Gerry to see things his way. That thought didn't occur to me when Gerry was acting unusually disagreeable.

### **Particle - The Cross Causes Crossness**

Oh, the remarkable, strange trials one must face in the world when choosing to walk by faith, according to the Law and will of God. No person taking up the cross is exempt from such conflicts. If those do not exist, there is no taking up of the cross, which is the only way to follow Jesus Christ. Just what does taking up the cross mean, if not death? Isn't that what the Roman cross was for? And who desires or enjoys death? No, it is not a pleasant thing at all.

### **Particle - False Funny**

My wife's mother is a perpetual giggler, always pacifying, flattering, pretending; often lightly apologizing at suspected offenses she may have committed, or trying to please somehow. Giggles seek to be accepted. It seems to me that giggling comes out of insecurity, nervousness, and fear, every bit as often as out of simplemindedness. It is a defense mechanism used to preserve oneself and divert unwanted attention from certain issues, yet it attracts attention in another way that is not expected or desirable for the one trying to avoid it.

It has repeatedly been my experience that people living in fear simply cannot be trusted. I have known several gigglers, and they have all been untrustworthy, every last one. This is not at all to say that those who don't giggle can be trusted, or that every giggler cannot be trusted, but generally speaking, this has been my experience.

### **Particle - A Salted, Sugared, and Slipperied Suite**

Marilyn and I made the Toews basement suite our first home. We would see many more.

For our honeymoon, Ludwig and Pat Teichgraber lent us their home for the weekend as a getaway. Wayne Andries and some friends of his decided to “fix” our suite while we were at Teichgraber’s. Mr. Toews, not suspecting what they were up to, let them in. They messed up everything; they spilled salt on the floors, cupboards, and in the beds, smeared Vaseline on doorknobs and other objects, and generally made a mess of the entire suite.

Though they meant and did no harm, in a narrow sense of the word, Marilyn didn’t appreciate it at all, and she made it clearly known. While I understood their pranksterism, having been a prankster myself for most of my life, and not a very nice one at that, I nevertheless supported Marilyn, feeling that this kind of conduct was not justified among Christians, and it didn’t represent love, holiness, or sobriety in Christ.

The boys sheepishly repented outwardly, likely wondering what the big deal was about, and offered to clean the mess, but Marilyn, being a fastidious housekeeper, determined to clean it all with my help. Vaseline and salt are not too easy to clean from doorknobs, floors, and beds.

The lesson? Do you recall my advising you not to be concerned about nosy landlords and landladies? Keep them in the know, and let them work for you! They have a stake in your welfare, too. But who knew? Who can anticipate all things?

Another lesson: Don’t believe for a moment that those who profess life changes in Christ (which may or may not be genuine) are not capable of the old life. Salvation is a process, which is not done until it is done. It can also be mimicked.

#### Particle - **Riding Two Horses at Once**

Marilyn and I had relatively new convictions on how to conduct ourselves in various matters and circumstances of life as believers. Thus, already divided from my family, it was our understanding that to discuss and make wedding plans with my parents was not an option.

My parents were displeased because they wanted me to marry as a Catholic and preferred that I marry a Ukrainian, though they respected Marilyn. Furthermore, my father wanted to hold a full-fledged Ukrainian wedding, with all the customary trappings - music, dancing, drinking, and general celebration. I was his firstborn, which is an important matter to many fathers, but he was in turmoil. He wanted to take pride in, and celebrate, his son, yet he was greatly disappointed with me.

They wanted the wedding in Dauphin for family and friends. On such short notice, there would be no opportunity for renting suitable facilities or for making significant preparations. They settled for holding a small reception in the only facility available a week later, the basement of the Ukrainian Catholic Hall.

The event was a trying affair because of the spiritual conflict. We were not comfortable with the celebration habits of the world, and we could not participate, which was a source of annoyance to many attending. We were not loved or honored, not that our being loved or honored was an issue to us.

Though we made our wishes clear, taking a stand against consuming alcohol, they served it anyway. My Aunt Polly, my father’s sister, an alcoholic, was a sad spectacle, being foolish and falling to the floor in her drunken stupor.

## Particle - A Marked Man for Eternity

The day before, while visiting with the family at my grandmother's, Aunt Polly turned to me and said, "You know that mark you got when you were baptized as a baby? Well, I **have news** for you! That mark is there **permanently**! There's nothing can wash it off, ever! You are Catholic, and that's that!"

At the time, I thought, "How great a hold the Catholic Church has on its members, leading them to think there is no leaving it alive!" I had no idea how great that power and hold was. There was more to be revealed to me in the near future about my spiritual relationship with the Catholic Church. Aunt Polly would prove to be right, unless God performed a miracle!

What good, I thought, was it doing Aunt Polly to have her "mark"?

## Particle - Archie Prevails

There was a bright spot in this event for us. Keep in mind that by now I had been a believer for nearly two years, preaching to several, trying to convert them. They were all, for the most part, defensive and offended. This was the general attitude toward me; it was somewhat the atmosphere that evening at the reception dinner.

My brother Archie, as best man, stood up to speak. He began by recounting some of the evils of our childhood and how I would pull devilish stunts on him, like giving him a bite of a chocolate bar that had a worm in it when we were in catechismal school. They laughed and laughed, perhaps feeling that I was embarrassed (which I wasn't), perhaps feeling that they were being vindicated, or feeling some hope and assurance by Archie's words that I was still the old Victor they had always known. I don't know - maybe it was just funny. I do know that Archie had them eating out of his hand.

Though I had no idea what Archie was going to say, I was not uncomfortable. I suppose I knew that he would testify of the Lord somehow, being a believer, and he did. While speeding down the road of a litany of bad things I had done, he suddenly hit the brake, depressed the clutch, and slammed the stick in reverse: "Then Victor changed," he proceeded.

"When he believed in Jesus, overnight, I found a very different person." Archie then spoke of how the Lord changed me. Very suddenly, it was one of those situations for which the expression is so apt, "You could hear a pin drop." It was like he had climbed up on a menacing tank, lifted the lid, and dropped a grenade inside. He had set them up and conquered them. Rarely, if ever, have I seen such a coup. Yet I know that the Lord gave him the words and wisdom to speak. I marveled.

## Particle - Lillian's Livid Looks

The next morning, our relatives and closer friends were customarily gathered at the hall for lunch. Having experienced great discomfort and contempt from many people, Marilyn and I did not want to go, but for my parents' sakes, who insisted, we went.

I had little idea how much my conversion to Christ offended the extended family. As an example, Uncle Ernie Hafichuk's wife Aunt Lillian and I met for a few moments at the door. I do not recall what I said. She did not say a word, but she glared at me with looks that could kill. We would hear more of her later.

## **Particle - Pittman Chuckles with Pleasure**

When Don and I were trimming trees near Choiceland, I had gone on and on about how Marilyn was chasing me and how we would never marry. I expressed to him my annoyance with her. Now word got to me that the news reached him about our hurried wedding, and that he got a good chuckle out of it - understandably so. I was embarrassed. It should have been a funny thing, but it wasn't to me. Why? I don't know. Pride? "Eating crow"?

Did I invite Don? Maybe I did; I don't remember, but I don't think I did, possibly for any or all of these reasons: one, it was short notice (not a good excuse at all); two, we intended to make it a small local event (not a good excuse at all); three, he was far away in Texas; four, Don and I really had not known one another long or that well (a hollow excuse); and five, I was too embarrassed (probably the real reason) - a selfish thing on my part, to be sure.

Where was my sense of humor? I wish I had invited him to the wedding. Perhaps he would not have made it, being in Texas. He might have appreciated it, however. Sorry if we didn't invite you, Don; so sorry. Please forgive me and know that I much appreciated you. In fact, if you should ever read this, please get in touch. I would love to hear from you. I have tried, finding several Don Pittmans, but not you.

I have the sincere hope and perhaps conviction that, one day, God will straighten out all these things, and we will all be so thankful for it. Obviously, I speak of a world other than this one.

## **Particle - Rapture in Christ Better than Marriage**

Marilyn and I returned to Saskatoon from Dauphin and settled into our basement suite and married life, but things weren't ideal. I was in the middle of a term paper, and she expected more from our marriage. She later confided to me that she had asked herself, "Is this all there is to it?" I suppose she expected some kind of fulfillment - perhaps a lot of attention from me, which she didn't get, but there was attention coming that neither of us expected, and plenty of it.

Commonly, newlyweds look forward to having children. I didn't realize I was looking forward to our **becoming** children.

**END OF PART ONE**

**NEXT: [PART TWO – PENTECOST TO ISRAEL](#)**