

60 Years

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most of them (I would claim) lagniappe

something extra, but never promised.

I could have found my resting place in 1983

as a log truck (sans lights),

barreled down Hwy 165 in North Louisiana.

I pulled onto the road, and for some odd reason on a moonless night,

I hit the brakes as the phantom monster barreled two feet from the fender

A 2 AM miracle as glorious as the parting of waters outside the corporation limits of Egypt.

Later on, it was the guy line of a telephone pole that snared the bushhog.

Rising high like a killer whale breaching the surface on the water.

Gravity ensued, slamming the engine block to the ground inches from my head as I lay on the ground.

These are just two of many instances that I have slipped through the crooks and crannies between life and death.

In other words, I have played with house-money for years.

(Or so it would seem)

but I contend that I have had a guiding unseen Hand, be it angelic intervention, supernatural consequence, or dumb luck.

Although I doubt the latter.

No one could ever be that lucky so often.

But even more so I have been drawn into grace and every sudden rescue reminds me that Jesus is Sustainer, and the degree of difficulty has been mighty high in sustaining me. And I am mercifully still alive after 60 years.

I have lived in the company of saints.

I was raised by two glorious, creative, passionate, flawed saints, Mark and Lillie Tullos. I still dwell under the shadow of their faith. Dad was a force of nature. He was bold. Total extravert. A musical savant. Play a line of music and he could replicate it, without looking at a note. He never met a stranger especially at Walmart. And mom never stopped pressing me. And that's a good thing. She wasn't a touchy-feely mom but touch me and you'd feel the force of a thousand Samurai warriors.

My favorite storyteller and theologian is my older sister, Melodye. She is a second mom.

My favorite artist is my brother, Mark. I've never met someone so creative and yet so entrepreneurial. He's built a handful of museums and I'm convinced his paintings will reside in many more after he leaves the planet.'

And the most encouraging, in-my-corner, got your-back-little sister on earth is mine. Her name is Melinda.

I am the one in the family, most uncomfortable in my own skin, often dreaming, rarely sure of myself but still on the hunt for the Great Divine. I am still the little one, dreams are my minions along with a few drunken stragglers I call obsessions.

I have had other guardians. Including:

Obed and Linda Kirkpatrick, Phillip Willis, Dennis Phelps,

Benjamin Harlan, Ed and Patsy Sutton, Debi Morris and Eugene Morris, Frank David Bennet, George Clark, Marjorie Radcliffe, Jean Woodye, Vivian Bush, Brooks Faulkner, Henry Webb, Ed and Patsy Sutton, Larry and Jan Payne—and too many more to remember but these are some of the ones I thanked God for yesterday.

I have heroes that shaped my journey Welby Boseman, Ron Brown, John Kyle, Randy Davis, Dennis Parrish, Jimmy Draper, Bill Choate (The guy I want to be like)

Jonathans arrived in every city, job and chapter of my life,

Justin Bufkin (Master Cinematographer), Roger Craig (Savant), Chris Johnson (My yoda), GB Howell (my reality check), Tim Shamburger (My oldest friend...47 Years!) Chris Turner (My Mars Hill companion), Derick Pindroh (My moving buddy), Jeff Wash (My West Texas kindred spirit) and Gavin Stevens (It's in the movie) Roc Collin (Preach)

This is all stream of consciousness and I'm missing about half of my Jonathans on this post. And I pray I've been a Jonathan to others.

A glorious, beautiful collection of guttersnipe brothers called TAK.

I'm also thankful for Elavil. I have taken this one med for 30 years and the one time I tried to taper I ended up in the psychiatric hospital. So every night I say grace, a word of thanks for this old fashioned antidepressant and take the pill.

I share secrets, some kept well and others less cloistered. Steve Holt is the custodian of most these days. He knows where my "jacked up jars" are buried. He knows enough to write a hit piece on me but he has mercifully resisted.

I was blessed with an additional sister, Johanna Leonard.

Still to this day, I don't think she really knows how much confidence she poured into my life in high school. She typed my first play that I wrote by hand and counseled me when my faith hit the rocks of the storm-tossed sea of doubt.

In 2006, I conducted the funeral of my best friend, Danny Dean. In one day, a thousand memories and shared dreams were transported to the unknown country. I didn't really cry until I drove from the graveside and then I wept for days. There are days when I can't see his face and it's in those times that I look at his son's profile picture and it's as clear as day. Danny had the force of personality and vision I both admired and coveted. Brutally honest. Fiercely loyal. Everyone knew Danny and I were inseparable, but he took the lead. When left , (in Frostian terms) I became closely acquainted with the night.

In the building I work, three godly women keep me in line on our corner of the building, Sharlyn, Cynthia, and Tammy. They put up with a lot of disorganization and video editing noise, and they've saved me a lot of embarrassment over the past five years.

And of course there is Darlene Tullos

She's my girl. Darlene has taught me so much about life and I am so glad we didn't give up on each other during difficult times. She's helped me find keys, wallets and rental trucks. The beauty married a dyslexic ragamuffin. Her compassion is unfathomable. I'm inspired by her heaven-and-earth moving faith. She and the guys have put up with my inability to say no, my codependency, and the crooked paths we traveled. Never have two more different people married but as the great mystic philosopher Rocky Balboa once said, "She's got gaps, I've got gaps, together we fill gaps." We are still enjoying the journey. I know the best is yet to come.

God blessed me with four men, Isaac, Jacob, Nathan and Caleb.

They are my prizes in my old age. Each one, teaching me so much and giving me reasons to live if only to see what happens next. They are masterpieces with a fierceness of love so great that it overwhelms me.

As I say often:

I am constantly amazed by the faithful love of Jesus.

And as I reflect on the life I've lived here, mostly fearful of everything, I realize that I never,

****EVER****

had anything to fear. He has been and always will be, relentlessly faithful, continuously sufficient, and absolutely available. I am still captivated by this lowly carpenter and faithful redeemer- I'm still struggling awkwardly to construct the right syntax and composition of words to describe the One who is truly indescribable. I will continue to try until the book is closed and my time comes.

King Jesus, your presence is palpable, your depth is dependable and your grace undeniable.