

Chapter One

My Early Years

I don't remember a lot from my earliest years, obviously, but there are certain stories in my life that stand out. This is my book, so perhaps I'll exercise extensive *literary license* to make commentary here and there.

I grew up on a small corn farm in northern Iowa near a small farm town. My home town's name is also an excellent description - Plainfield. That's my home town, a plain old corn field with a few houses, grain elevator, grocery store, two churches, three gas stations, two bars, and not much else.

Some people might think life in such a small town was incredibly boring, but not me. That was a much different time and place, and I had a wonderful life as a young child. I remember life in those early days as very fun and filled with lots of love. A major part of that is the fact that all four of my grandparents lived within one mile of my farm. My parents and grandparents were all *wonderful, loving, Christian* people. How's that for making me one of the most fortunate people on the planet? Mom taught *Sunday School* for many years, and Dad was a *Deacon*. I also had five siblings, and we got along pretty well. Not perfectly, of course, but pretty well.

I remember one *Christmas Eve* when I was approximately five or six years old. We had been to the Christmas Eve service at church, all eight of us as a family. That's a lot of people for one car,

but we had a *1956 Buick* station wagon at the time. We called that car the *old tomato soup can*, because that pretty much describes the color of the car. We were on the way home from church, and my brother Stan kept saying that he saw *Santa Claus* on one side of the car or the other, up in the sky. I kept looking and looking, but never could see him. I was in my normal seating position for that car, the far back end of the station wagon. Santa kept disappearing in the clouds. I got rather frustrated, but I never did stop looking. Of course we got home and went into the house, and I was still frustrated that I never could get a good look at Santa.

I vaguely remember the car that we had before the tomato soup can, but I don't have any memories *in* that car. It was a 1950 Ford. I can remember seeing it sitting under the tree in our driveway, but that's all I can remember. That car was off-white in color. I was pretty young then.

When I was in *kindergarten*, I missed school on the day of our field trip. That was obviously the end of life as we know it! How could God let me be sick on that most special of all days? Life sometimes just isn't fair, but I had the *chicken pox*! My Mom, bless her heart, knew that I was devastated at the loss of that day on the field trip, so she got me a special present. We didn't get new toys very often, because money was usually in short supply, so this special present was *pretty special*! It was a wind-up toy car that was spring-loaded, so that it would zoom across the room and explode as the front bumper hit the wall. I thought that toy was pretty awesome - almost as good as actually going on my school field trip! Of course that car was another one of my gazillion reasons for loving Mom. She was an incredibly wonderful Mom, and I was number five, age wise, of six kids. How could one woman have so much love in her

heart to love so many people so endlessly? *She was pure angel!*
That's my story, and I'm sticking with it!!! I played with that car *all day*, and many, many times on following days, weeks, and months.

My kindergarten teacher was *Mrs. K*. I don't remember her much, except that she was very awesome as a teacher. She was also the mother of one of my brothers' friends. Her husband was a bus driver at our school, and an incredibly talented mechanic. He serviced and repaired all of the buses for our school. He also designed, and built, a go-cart for their son. My brothers told stories about that go-cart. It was so awesome, because it had two motors - one for each back wheel. I was told that it was an incredibly challenging task to coordinate two motors like that, but Mr. K achieved just that. This go-cart was the most awesome, and fastest go-cart known to local mankind!

Kindergarten was a half-day program, and I attended in the morning. *Nap time* was one of my favorite parts of the day, but I did enjoy other parts of the day also. Mrs. K found ways to make me feel smart. I liked feeling smart! All young children need to feel smart, and that might be one area where many children are underserved in our education system today!

I remember another awesome family experience. I was too young to do much more than watch, but we used to kill several chickens, use boiling water to scald them and pluck their feathers. Their meat was canned and stored in family freezers. This whole process took place in Grandpa and Grandma Gritzner's basement, and everyone worked hard for an entire day, or more. They had large metal double doors into their basement from the outside, and those doors were usually closed, but they were open for our day of processing chickens.

I only remember staying overnight at Grandma Gritzner's house once, but that night will always be in my memory. She put me in the same upstairs bedroom where my Dad had slept as a child. That was special to me, because I love my Dad so much. She was a wonderful loving lady, and she tucked me in for the night, and prayed with me. I had spent considerable time in that bedroom looking at stereo slides of World War I, using a hand-held slide viewer, but this was my only time to sleep there. Grandpa Gritzner was in the U.S. Army during World War I. This was a very special moment!

I also stayed overnight at Grandma Sullivan's house once. I don't remember much about it, except that it was on a Saturday night. Grandpa, Grandma, and I got up the next morning and had breakfast. We all got dressed up nicely for church, but we never got to church. As we were leaving the house, a bird pooped on Grandpa's head. We got a good laugh out of that, but we didn't have time to get Grandpa cleaned up again before church. That was another favorite story that got repeated many times at family gatherings!

I also remember that Grandpa Sullivan had a Desoto. It had big fins on the back end, and a big engine. Grandma Sullivan never knew how to drive. One time Grandpa tried to teach her, and she accidentally drove the car through the wrong end of the garage.

My Dad used to sell milk from his dairy barn to several people from town. They would come out to our farm, enter the barn, and pay 50 cents for a gallon of milk. It was all done on the honor system. People would write down their name, how many gallons they bought, and put their money in the empty pipe tobacco can. Dad provided us with empty pipe tobacco cans, and plenty of milk.

Several people put their money in different hiding places, but still wrote their information on the log. That way Dad knew to look for their money. Some people took milk without paying, and Dad would sometimes talk to them about that, letting them know it felt better to give them the milk they need knowingly, instead of them just taking the milk. He could help people in difficult situations, because he had been there. He grew up during *The Great Depression*, went to the U.S. Army during World War II, had health issues, etcetera. Dad frequently used such occurrences to teach us about *honesty, generosity, integrity, etcetera*.

Dad smoked a pipe throughout most of my years as a young person. I remember him puffing that pipe through most of his waking moments. That pipe went into his mouth in the morning nearly as soon as he got out of bed, and it came out of his mouth at nearly the last possible moment as he got into bed at night. I remember the sweet smell of his tobacco, but I never thought of the health ramifications back then. Today I know of the dangers associated with smoking, but I didn't know that as a young kid. I just thought of that pipe as part of the man I loved - my Dad. Of course, my Mom would talk to him about quitting the pipe, as did other friends and relatives. He wasn't very patient with that idea, but there did come a day when he caught a very bad cold. He was so sick, that the pipe just didn't taste good to him. He decided, to everyone's surprise, that it was a good time to stop smoking that pipe. He laid it down, and never picked it up again. It was a very tough battle, but Dad was definitely not a wimp! He tried gum, as an assistant in the fight to quit smoking, but he would chew so hard that he got headaches. Then he started chewing on kernels of field corn, but that was hard on his teeth. His eating habits changed as part of this transition, and he gained some weight. Somewhere along

the line, he also chewed tobacco. I found some incredibly gross pictures of people who lost huge pieces of their lips and/or face to cancer and other health issues because of chewing tobacco. He got rid of the chewing tobacco! It was indeed a difficult battle, but Dad never picked up that pipe again!

Larry was one of the people that came out from town to buy milk. I was perhaps four or five years old when I first met Larry. He was originally from Plainfield but had moved to Colorado for several years and had a good job “out west!” He would stop and talk to me, and I loved his stories about living “out west!” He taught me how to have “quick draw” contests with him using imaginary guns, like the real cowboys do! If either one of us would see the other on the street, or wherever, we would shoot to kill! That continues to this day. My wife and I try to visit family and friends in Iowa every summer, and I still look for Larry to have a “quick draw.” There have been many times when he saw me first, and he got the kill. On many occasions I would purposely find him and shoot first. The element of surprise can be quite useful, considering the fact that Larry never knew exactly when I was coming up from Texas to visit family and friends. It turns out that Larry’s daughter was a friend of mine in High School! She married another friend of mine – Ken.

One of my best friends of all time lived down the road about a mile, on a farm. His name was *Clayton*. We would spend a day together from time to time at his family’s farm or mine. We were in the same class at school, and in the same *Sunday School* class at church. We were pretty close friends. We would spend hours building forts in the hay in our barn or fighting pretend battles in their two story chicken coup. Sled rides and toboggan rides on Clayton's hill were quite memorable! One day we were called in to

the house by Clayton's Mom because it was getting dark. We weren't quite ready to quit sledding for the day, so we did some more sledding into the ditch near his house. Clayton was bigger than me, so he laid down on the sled and I laid down on top of him. We rode down into his ditch, and Clayton somehow injured his back. That had been a wonderful day of sledding on the hill, and it ended in a not so wonderful way with that injury. He has always been a good friend, and I felt pretty bad about his injury. He and his mother repeatedly told me not to worry about it, because it was simply an accident. Accidents do happen, but it sure did put a damper on a wonderful day with a wonderful friend!

Not too long after that injury, during the summer, Clayton was at my house. We were wrestling around on the floor in the living room. Clayton usually won our wrestling ventures, because he has always been bigger and stronger than myself. On that particular day, I suddenly was able to flip him over onto his back and pin him. I was so excited about that, that it took me longer than it should have to realize that his back injury was acting up. He was in pain, and I didn't notice soon enough. That's probably why I was able to win that time, but I didn't notice until he had already experienced a bit too much pain. Again I felt bad about his back injury, but of course he was very gracious in telling me not to worry about it.

I remember another day when Clayton and I were playing in the hay mow at my place. Dad had been making hay, and our barn was very close to full to the peak of the roof. My Dad sometimes got irritated with our forts in the hay mow, because he would fall into one of our tunnels while he was in the mow getting hay for the cows. He was quite patient over it, though, because he realized that building forts and tunnels in the hay mow was one of the highlights of life on the farm for young kids! This seems like a good time to say

that my Dad was an awesome, loving Dad. On the day that I'm thinking of, Clayton and I had been up in the mow for perhaps a couple hours having a really good time. I suddenly had to pee! My options were few. I could climb down out of the mow and go clear to the house to use the rest room. That seemed like a long way to go, because we were way up in the mow, near to the peak of the roof at the far end of the barn away from the house, and it sure did seem like a long way across the yard to the house! Another option was to pee in a corner of the barn, but that seemed dirty and the hay would surely stink. I chose to pee out the window at the end of the barn away from the house. I was certain that this would be a safe option. What I was forgetting, was that Dad had an electric fence around a pen on one side of the barn, and that wire ran shortly under the window over part of the barn structure to the other side of the barn and was connected to the electric fence in the cow yard.

I knew of two types of electric fence machines. One was rather wimpy, and the other one was called the *weed chopper*! It was called that, because big weeds could fall across an electric fence and short it out. Weed choppers were strong enough to burn through the big weed and avoid a short. Of course the electric fence wire running under that particular window was a weed chopper, and *I peed right on it!!* When I bellowed in pain, Clayton was incredibly startled! He knew that I was peeing out the window because there was nothing in that direction except a corn field, a pasture, and the Cedar river. Peeing out a barn window was nothing new in our world but bellowing that much in pain was definitely a new experience for both of us. That day will live in infamy in my memory. Eventually Clayton and I both laughed about that experience, but I promise you that it took me a lot longer to get to that point of laughing than it did Clayton.

Across the road from Clayton was another friend, named *Bobby*. His family also lived on a farm. Almost everybody lived on a farm, as far as I could tell! Bobby was also in our class at school, but

I'm not sure if his family ever went to church. I just don't know much about Bobby's family, because they moved away not long after my kindergarten year at school. They moved to a bigger farm north of Nashua, the first town north of Plainfield. I visited Bobby a couple times a few years later, but we just didn't know each other very well anymore. The years had taken us in slightly different directions, and I was unsuccessful in my attempt to rekindle our friendship of earlier years. I did, however, find it interesting when my older brother, Stan, dated Bobby's older sister a few years later. This is indeed a small world! As a matter of fact, Stan was dating Bobby's sister when he met the young lady who has now been his wife for over forty years.

When I was in first grade, or so, I had a friend named *Anthony*. His family only lived near Plainfield for one or two years. He was pretty big for his age, but even more noticeable was his strong love for *science*. He was the leader in our friendship, and I was happy to follow. Twin sisters were in our class, and they were pretty cute. Anthony and I decided, at his leading, that *Roseanne* was his girlfriend and *Roxanne* was mine. It only made sense, since she had rocks in her head, as was made obvious by her name. Anthony was the smarter one of us! We never did inform them that they were our girlfriends.

I remember one day when Mom allowed me to go home with Anthony after school on the bus. His family lived on a farm, of course, and we spent the evening down by a creek throwing rocks and talking about science experiments that he had done or had seen in a book or magazine. I was young enough that I hadn't really concerned myself yet with what I might be interested in. Knowing

Anthony was perhaps one of the first seeds leading me toward a life in science. His family moved to *Unionville, Missouri*.

At about this time, I had one of the most negative experiences of my life. I found myself on the negative end of *bullying*. We were out at playground, and I wanted to talk to *Debbie*. Well, a neighbor named *Stan* had different ideas. He liked Debbie, and he was much bigger than me. He shoved me and told me that I was too small to like someone as pretty as Debbie. I lowered my head and walked away in shame. What happened next, however, shames me much more! A day or two later I became the bully, and the memory haunted me for years! I bumped into Billy, his younger brother, and his little sister on the playground. Billy was in my class, and I should have treated him like the friend that he always was. I don't remember the complete incident, but I was pretty mean to Billy, and I pushed him around quite a bit. I didn't hit him, but I was still pretty mean and I said some mean things. I had the chance several years later to renew our friendship, but the damage to that friendship still bothered me!

I was six or seven, when Stan and Dan got a present that made them happier than I'd ever seen them before. It was Christmas Eve, and our family was gathered around the Christmas tree, opening presents. A small present had both of their names on it, so they opened that box together. In that box they found a small, plastic, toy horse. They were confused, so they looked at Dad wondering what it meant. He told them, "the real one is across the road in the neighbor's barn." Now they knew that they had just received a real horse. They looked at Dad again, and before they could even ask, Dad told them to go ahead. They ran across the road, into the neighbor's barn, and hugged their new young horse. They named

her *Christi*, and many wonderful memories later came from the relationship those three developed.

A year or two later, Dad pull off another awesome Christmas surprise. Dee was really wanting a ring that she had seen in a store, but Mom had told her that we simply couldn't afford it. Dad found out about the ring, so he went to the store with Mom and bought the ring. However, he believed that the presentation of a present is sometimes more important than the present itself. He got an empty box from a neighbor who had recently purchased a washing machine. Dad taped the ring, in its pretty little box, inside the huge, empty washing machine box. He then wrapped the box and put a huge bow on top. He put that present in the back room, where nobody would likely see it.

When the right time came along, he told Dee to stand up, and her present would be delivered to her. He called Stan, Dan, and myself to come with him and help bring in Dee's present. Dad filled us in on his secret, and the four of us carried that box in, pretending to be straining under the box's significant weight. When Dad said, "now," we threw the box at Dee. She almost had a heart attack, expecting the box to be very heavy. When she regained her composure, Dad told her to open her present. It took her a while to get in, because Dad had taped it up very thoroughly. She finally got inside and found nothing but an empty box. She gave Dad a confused look, and he told her to keep looking. She eventually found the jewelry box with ring and gave Dad lots of hugs and kisses. She got the very ring she had wanted, and she was very happy!

I was somewhat lonely as a kid. Reading became my favorite escape. "*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*" and "*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*" were two of my favorite books. Living on a farm

with a river along one side gave me perfect setting for adventure and imagination. I spent many hours at the river, dangling my toes in the water, imagining that I was Tom or Huck. I tried to find good logs and branches with which to build a raft, but that idea just never came together. I was apparently a kid more gifted with imagination than the talent to make those ideas become reality. I also read through the “*Brains Benton Mystery*” series repeatedly and dreamt of becoming a detective.

Summers on the farm were always fun. I could spend hours riding my bike for miles around the neighboring farms. I also slept many nights on the south porch with my brothers and sisters. We would laugh and tell stories well into the night. That got me into trouble one night, because I fell asleep with gum in my mouth. I woke up the next morning with gum in my hair, everywhere! Of course, my siblings got a good laugh out of it. All I got out of it was the shortest haircut ever!

My Grandpa Gritzner was one of the first people to realize that I was really interested in Science. I was still a pretty young kid when Grandpa pointed out that I was perhaps slower than other kids my age to learn how to ride a bicycle or play baseball, because I was simply more interested in building my *Science Laboratory* in the basement or collecting rocks from the river bank. I really loved spending time down by the river bank collecting *agates*, *quartz*, *geodes*, *sandstone*, and other rock samples. I always wanted a *rock tumbler*, to polish my agates like I saw in catalogs and magazines, but for one reason or another I never did get one.

To this day I keep a sample of mudstone in my classroom that I found on that river bank. I often tell students that it is a petrified dinosaur turd, and then leave them wondering. It isn't. I have even

caught a student privately and asked them to play along with a prank. I would ask for a volunteer to do the “*scratch and sniff test*” after putting a drop of water on the ‘petrified turd.’ That volunteer would go through the motions then play act like they were nearly vomiting. I really was fortunate to have a river running right by the side of Dad's farm. That's just one more reason why I am one of the luckiest humans on this planet!

One day, Grandpa Gritzner showed me one of the coolest things ever seen by mankind, to my knowledge. He was born in 1892 and had seen some pretty cool things over the years. When he first realized how into science I was, he went into his attic and dug out an old book that he had from when he was a young kid. It was an old Science book that he got when the community school bought new Science books. He opened that book to a specific page and showed me something very interesting. That Science book stated plainly that “*Scientists today believe that it is impossible for man to build a machine that will fly.*” Of course that blew my mind, because I knew very well that people flew on airplanes every day. I had been interestedly listening to talk on the radio and TV about my country's strong push to put a man on the moon by the end of this decade! That's when Grandpa showed me the copyright date of that book. That Science text had been published in 1900, just three years before the Wright Brothers flew their first airplane near *Kitty Hawk, North Carolina*. My Grandpa had seen that very text book in his classroom when he was a young boy in school.

Grandpa Gritzner was also the last *Deputy Sherriff* in town to ride a horse while performing his duties as Deputy. He also owned the first tractor in the area, because everyone was still farming with horses.

One of my first science experiments was supposed to produce a *diamond*. I had read that diamonds are produced by intense pressure on pure carbon, so I duct taped a piece of coal to the railroad track and waited for a train to go by. I had, unfortunately, missed the part about enormous amounts of time being involved in the process. I also was quite unsuccessful at keeping the carbon in one place. If I did produce any diamonds, I never could find them! I tried several times and spent hours looking for them after the train went by!!!

Another talent that I apparently lacked, was about to be identified. I had permission from Mom and Dad to build a science laboratory in the basement. My parents were always very loving, and supportive of talents displayed by their children. They purchased a *chemistry set* for me, and I had collected various books about astronomy, dinosaurs and fossils, the Wright Brothers first flight, and several other scientific topics that interested me. I had a desk, a lamp, a 3" *reflecting telescope*, a *microscope*, and a vivid imagination. I was determined to be a *Mad Scientist*!

I spent many hours in my laboratory, and Mom always wanted the basement door open while I was down there, so she could keep track of me, to some degree. I would frequently get so intently involved in my planning and plotting, that I would break out into song at a rather loud volume. My siblings complained many times to Mom about my singing, but she just called the experience my "*happy noises*." On one evening, Stan and Dan had listened to more than enough of my "happy noises", so they snuck part way down the basement steps with a tape recorder. They recorded my "happy noises" and played them back as loud as they could! I got a good taste of my own medicine and decided that evening to stop singing.

When I was nine or ten, lots of new faces entered my life. I'm thinking of three families that moved near to me and became the source of some of my best friends. I don't really have one *best friend*, but I do have several close friends that fit into that category.

Bill definitely is one of my best friends! I remember the first day that he came to school. We were in third grade. When our teacher introduced Bill as a new student in our class, I wanted desperately to meet him and try to make friends with him. I searched for the perfect words to start a conversation with him. I pondered for quite a while, and finally made my first attempt at starting a friendship with Bill. I got next to Bill and said, "nice hand writing!" Thank God that Bill was better at meeting new people than myself, and we soon became best buddies! Bill never did seem to have a shortage of good friends, but I wasn't as graceful at making and keeping friends as he was. Bill was always so incredibly smart, and he was pretty good at sports, too. He lived in town. He's now an M.D., and he lives in Illinois. I don't get to visit him very often, but we do visit occasionally when we get the chance. Thank God for Facebook! That's nearly the only way that Bill and I can keep in touch any more.

One time, a couple years later, Bill and I had the chance to float down the Cedar River in a boat, pick a sand bar, and camp out for the night. My Dad had driven us a few miles north and set us afloat for a few hours of fun. We did some fishing, built a camp fire on the sand bar, threw rocks and told stories. We both enjoyed a short Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn adventure. We stopped the boat at the little pasture near our farm and walked up to the house. Dad then drove us back down to the river to retrieve the boat. Life was good!

I'm thinking that it was the same year that Bill's family moved to town, but I'm not sure. It was at least close to that same time when another family moved nearby - the family of *Bernadette*. My church had some friendly and cooperative relationships with a sister church in Waverly, Iowa. Waverly was one town south of Plainfield. Through that church, several young kids from *inner city Chicago* were brought to town for a week-long visit during the summer. Different families hosted a kid or two for that week. Bernadette's mother came on that trip as part of the supervising group. *Cheryl* and *Don* each stayed at our house, on different years, through that project. We stayed in touch with both, for several years.

Somewhere along the line, Bernadette's entire family moved from inner city Chicago to Waverly, Iowa. Her Dad got a job at a factory in Waverly and worked there until he retired. That family was the first African American family in the area, to my knowledge, and some people had a problem with that. I was just happy to have new friends, and I to this day would like to consider myself to be the *least prejudiced* human you will ever know. God created us all equally, and I simply have no time for prejudice against any humans. *Some humans simply have need for more prayer, but I'm going to try not to be judgmental.* Some people were simply born into different circumstances than myself. I've said it before, and I'm going to say it again. I'm simply one of the luckiest humans on planet Earth. Besides, Bernadette was very cute!

A couple years later, another family moved to town, and lived just a few houses away from Bill. From that family, Bill and I both met *Jim*. Jim was in our class at school, and boy could he run! Within the next few years, Jim became not just a good friend, but also our best football running back and a pretty good basketball and

baseball player. Jim's Dad also worked at a factory in Waverly, but not the same factory as Bernadette's Dad. In later years, Jim worked at that same factory where his Dad worked. Jim worked there until he retired a few years ago. I still visit Jim when I get the chance, because he still lives in Plainfield.

I remember when I got my first bicycle! I knew of some kids with 20-inch bikes, and they seemed too small. I knew of some kids with 26-inch bikes, and they seemed too big. I was very happy when Mom and Dad gave me a 24-inch bike. I was so happy to have a bike that I quickly got over the part about it being used, very used. As a matter of fact, it was so used that the brake didn't work very well. I'll never forget how I figured that one out! My very first bicycle ride outside of the farm yard was down a nearby gravel road toward the river. The road came to a dead end at the river, with a nice big barricade across the road. As I came closer and closer to the barricade I applied the brake and realized, too late I might add, that the brake was nearly nonexistent! At the last second before hitting the barricade, I aimed my bike at the left ditch. Farm ditches in northern Iowa are, in general, about six feet deep. This ditch was no exception. My bike and I did a complete end-for-end somersault as we entered that ditch. I landed in the ditch with my bike on top of me, and just laid there for a minute processing what just happened.

The L family had a weekend fishing cabin right there, and one of the men came running from the house to ensure that I was okay. I was shaken and bruised a bit, but generally okay. He gave me an orange soda, and we talked for a while. I don't remember a lot about our conversation, but on top of that list was a discussion of how to improve the brake on that bike! That brake never was very good, but Dad and I did lubricate things a bit, and I got as much good out

of that used bike as possible. I knew that a new bicycle just wasn't going to happen any day soon in a farm family on a small farm with six kids!

When Dee was a High School Senior, she was dating *Doug Severs*, the man that she later married and lived happily ever after with. One weekend night, Doug and Dee were out on a date, and Dad realized that he had forgotten to do something in the barn. I don't remember what the task was, but Dad walked out to the barn wearing nothing but his briefs. He had been getting ready to go to bed and didn't feel like putting his clothes back on. Our farm was in the country, and it should be an easy task to accomplish without being seen by anyone, or so he thought.

While he was in the barn, Doug and Dee drove in. Hoping that Doug would drop Dee off and leave soon, Dad decided to wait them out. The wait got longer and longer, as Doug and Dee kept kissing and kissing in Doug's 1964 Chevrolet Impala. Finally, Dad gave up, and he simply walked back to the house, right by Doug's car. Doug and Dee saw him, couldn't believe their eyes, and this story is a long-time favorite at Gritzner family gatherings to this day!

Two more stories about my years at Plainfield Elementary School involve the playground. One day I was going down the big metal slide on my stomach. My friend Ken tried to pat me on the back as I slid by at high speed. He missed and smacked me on the back of my head instead. That bounced my face off the metal slide and chipped my tooth.

On one other day I was running as fast as I could down a sidewalk out by the playground. I tripped on something and took a

bad fall, landed on the sidewalk, and skidded. In the process, I damaged my thumbnail badly enough that it came off.

Now, these stories might sound insignificant to you, but I find some of these stories to be life changing. These are some of the stories that shaped me into the man that I am today. I give God the glory, but I am rather proud of the man that He has allowed me to become. *Don't Be Mean To People! It's Just Not Right!* More on that later!