

# **My Perfect Storm**

**A Story To Be Told**  
A 50-Year Journey  
from Chaos To Calm

**Scott Brearley**

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# Testimonials

Forty-two years ago I met Scott at an AA meeting that was being held at an Ontario Correctional Facility. After I spoke at this meeting, I met Scott and saw him as the cute little boy who may have come to the meeting for cigarettes and coffee but underneath I saw a cocky, angry man who really didn't give a damn. As I watched him grow into a man, I saw so much more in Scott. There was love, kindness, and joy. He always had determination and an amazing work ethic. Scott enhanced my life and gave me someone to love, talk to, to help guide and brought meaning in my life. I am so proud that he calls me his mother and I know he will bring truth, honour, respect, dignity, accountability and reliability to those he loves. It is a pure joy to see the love and respect that Scott and his wife Lisa have for each other. I love Scott dearly and I am proud to call him my son. All the best to my son Scott.

**AKA - Mom, Phyllis Muller**

Scott has spent the majority of his life trying to run from his past; building up walls and living in solitude. When I connected with Scott about five years ago, his hurt was disguised behind a tough-guy persona. Despite the hardships Scott faced throughout his childhood, especially with his family, he was full of unconditional love, forgiveness, and courage. Over the past couple of years, I have witnessed Scott be

reborn. I have seen a man full of hurt, anger, and resentment, peel off the tough-guy mask and show the world who he truly is. Scott has transformed from the man who pulled himself out of a hole to the man who will stretch out his hand to help others out of theirs.

**Niece, Tara Brearley**

As time went on, things were getting worse and worse for me and my depression grew to the point that sucking on the barrel of a gun was a very good idea in my mind. At this time Scott came to me and asked me if I would be willing to be coached by him. I did give it some serious thought, and since I liked the changes I've seen in him, I said 'yes'. This was definitely one of my better decisions I've made in quite some time. Did the changes within me happen overnight? No. However, while receiving Scott's support, I've been able to come out from under a heavy bolder of major depression and start living again. I am truly happy now and I love to watch my grandchildren grow and laugh. Thanks Scott for all your help.

**Friend, Mark Hartnett**

I have known Scott for about 20 years. Scott was there for me at one of my lowest and most difficult times when he and his wife, at the time, jumped on a plane to Mexico and helped me out. That is when I truly realized what an amazing, empathetic person he was. I have watched Scott go through difficulties with relationships, family and health issues. At times I was afraid he would not make it to the other side and would never believe in his self-worth and I would lose him to suicide. Since Scott began his forward walking journey the change has been AMAZING!!! He now believes in himself and the value he has to offer others. He has found joy in all aspects of his life and now

values self and others. He has found his beautiful wife Lisa and they have truly enriched each other's lives. I like to think of Scott as my little brother and I am forever grateful to have him in my life.

**Friend, Colleen McLennan**

There are very few times in your life when you meet someone with a unique combination of humility, courage, strength, integrity, openness and vulnerability, while having lived experiences that even half the volume, would take most people out of commission. Scott is one of those rare individuals. From the moment I met him I knew he was different and I also knew he would do whatever it took, for as long as it took to get to the goals he had for himself and later Lisa once they had become a couple. With heart, dedication and true grit, he persevered and never gave up. He faced opportunity and adversity equally, learning to enjoy the gifts from both. Watching Scott grow & heal to where he is now has been an honor and a privilege and seeing how he continues to use his life to gift others in any way he can, gives hope in a world where so many only focus on themselves. I can truly and honestly say my life is richer for having met Scott and I am truly excited for him on this next chapter in his life and all those that will be lucky enough to share in his gifts.

**Founder, Katalyst Integrated Trauma Treatment,  
Kimberly Davidson**



# Dedication

This book is dedicated to you—the reader. I know you’ve struggled at some point in your life, and my book is here to show you that CHANGE IS POSSIBLE. No matter what.

Through my journey of addiction, 12-step programs, therapists, and personal development work, I’ve come to see it’s all about your choices and the decisions we make. I know that through my story, you’ll see that too.

Were these choices easy for me? HELL NO, however, they were my FORWARD WALKING CHOICES and, sometimes, my backward walking choices. My journey of failures, challenges, and successes has forged the more compassionate and loving man I am today.

Like me, you may have doubted yourself and your worth. You may have had many times in life when you felt like you didn’t fit in and life wasn’t worth living. You may have even contemplated or attempted to end it all. I’m here to say that your life is worth it. You’re worth it. I’m worth it, too.





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# Introduction

Hello, my name is Scott Allen Brearley.

I'm a 56-year-old man and I've been around the 12-step programs since I was 15. That got me to a certain point, and then I was lost. I kept doing the same thing over and over. In the end, I needed to walk away to grow.

I'm a man who was raised in a home that bred addiction and where violence was prominent. I never knew what safe was when I was at home and never knew who to trust. I know my story is the same as many other people. There was always booze around. Mom and dad fought about everything.

I had tried sipping drinks and got really drunk at my sister's wedding when I was 12. It was around the same time that I started smoking pot. It was like my body craved it. At this early age, my addiction was off and running.

I stole money from the beginning to get more drugs. I was called a little puke by my mom and was told I would never amount to anything. I got into fights all the time.

I thought my life was normal and thought everyone did it. By the time I was 15, I drank and smoked weed daily, always looking for the next high.

## **My Perfect Storm**

I was out of control, on a suicide mission from the first time I got high.

My whole life, I've always chased people to be in my life like I was never good enough or could never measure up, no matter how long I had been clean.

I was in and out of jail, exactly where my family thought I should be. I fit in there, or so I thought.

Getting sober was difficult at first. I was going to 12-step meetings, surrounded by people doing the same thing. I felt like I fit in for the first time in my life.

I look back and see it was just a semi-safe place to work on changing my life. The 12-step programs are great, to a point. I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't spent years going to them. However, for me, I needed more therapy.

Today, my opinion is a little different. After years of being in and out of 12-step meetings, I see that there are a lot of great people in A.A. and N.A.; however, there are also a lot of sick people, so I have to be careful. I don't think it's as black and white as laid out in the literature.

There's lots of gossip, and I found that people never let you change. We can become as stuck there as in active addiction. I went back and tried the same thing over and over, expecting different results. That sounds a little like an addiction. Or the definition of insanity.

I got to a point where I was sicker in recovery than when I was loaded 24/7. I spent years like this with it so ingrained in me that I was doomed to jail or death if I left the 12-step world. Well, at many points, I had welcomed death. I pushed everyone out of my life.

## Introduction

Alone and scared with some new medical problems from not looking after myself, I sought out a different direction. I went to the Personal Success Institute (PSI) for a three-day weekend course that teaches you how to show up for life.

Over the years, I had worked on a lot of what they showed me that weekend, which helped me grow. On the last day of the course, they attempted to up-sell all of us for their next course. I was mad and thought, *how dare they?* I went out to my Harley to ride home, and I thought to myself, *I want to die. Why was I so unwilling to spend money on my mental health?* I went back in and signed up for the next course.

Around the same time, I sought out a professional to help with all the trauma I had in my life. From there, I learned how to stop living life from a victim's stance. I met Kimberly Davidson, an amazing lady at Katalyst Integrated Trauma Treatment. She was a pivotal part of a big shift in my life.

So, I invite you to come on my journey with me. Read my book and tell me what you think. I hope my turbulent past and major life changes help you in your journey to find recovery like I have today. My beliefs have changed drastically where addiction and alcoholism are concerned.

Thank you,

Scott Allen Brearley



# Preface

So, it begins.

I would have laughed if you told me I was going to write a book at the age of 55. I would have put myself down and made excuses. I've had a difficult life.

I'm a 55-year-old man. I've struggled all my life with injuries, addiction, and loneliness. I've had feelings of stupidity and struggled for happiness or purpose. In my life, I've always slipped through the cracks.

For many years, people have told me that they see a leader in me and that I will do great things in life.

But then I would stumble again. And again. And again.

As I grew and changed, self-doubt was always on my ass.

I grew up in Burlington, Ontario, Canada. I'm the son of Barbara Jean Bronson (Brearley) and Ronald Earl Brearley.

I was the youngest of five children. Gary was the oldest, and Lorie was born about a year later. Doug came along about two years after Lorie, and within another year, Ted was born.

## **My Perfect Storm**

Then, five years later, I was the last Brearley child. My lasting impression of being born as a boy was that my mom wanted me to be a girl, and she never let me forget it.

What I remember about my childhood is that I really didn't have one. At least not one where children feel they can really just be children. No worries. Carefree. My home was full of violence and tension.

Because of my trauma-filled life and a major accident at the age of seven, my memory of exact dates is very unclear. All I remember is that I had a sense of survival in my house and that I didn't really feel loved.

I know that my home was not a place where love really existed. My home was a place where I never found true support or help.

This book is about how I remember both the big and minor events in my life. For you, my story may feel broken and disjointed, and for me, my life *was* broken and disjointed.

In writing this book, I have worked through many tough memories, ones that haunt and trouble me. There are many memories that make me doubt why I'm even worthy to be alive.

This is a recount of my life. A journey filled with anger and mistrust and, later, a life that I never even thought was possible for a man like me. A life of liberty and love; however, the memories still linger and have so strongly imprinted on my soul that the struggle is always just a moment away.





## CHAPTER 1

# **My Turbulent, Unpredictable Beginnings**

**I'm going to kill that little son of a bitch...**

Our family did attempt to do some typical family things. However, the part that I remember is that dad was always drinking and even had his own beer fridge. We did a lot of camping over the years when I was young, and there were some great feelings around those camping adventures that we went on.

## **My Perfect Storm**

On one of our camping trips, we were camping in Kill Bear Park. Since our site was on the beach, I wandered back to our tent trailer for a nap without telling anyone. I was sound asleep until dad's voice startled me awake. He was yelling, "I'm going to kill that little son of a bitch when I get my hands on him."

I remember laying there terrified, not sure what to do. If I said anything, I knew I would get a beating. So, I hid. I didn't move.

One of my older brothers came in and found me there. To my surprise, I didn't get a beating. There was no physical punishment this time, but the verbal threat was the all-consuming punishment that I received that day.

## **You're no good**

I have very few memories of happy times in my life.

When I was young, I had two bunny rabbits named Casey and Finnegan, which you may know from the Canadian T.V. show *Mister Dress Up*. I really liked those bunnies.

I had accidentally left the rabbit's cage door open, and they ran away. I was heartbroken. They were something I loved, and I think they kind of loved me back. I remember being scolded during dinner by the whole family, as they said, "You need to be more responsible."

In the later years, I found out that it was actually my parents who gave my rabbits away without telling me, and then they actually left the door open to make it look like I did it. And, of course, I was easily blamed.

## **My Turbulent, Unpredictable Beginnings**

I felt like I was given mixed messages growing up. I love you, but you're no good. I never felt safe with my family. Not feeling safe did a lot of damage to me. Reflecting back, my home was not a home as I felt like I was in a constant state of fear. Fear of violence and the lack of unconditional love really haunted me.

### **Drowning**

One memory that puts a smile on my face is how I loved Johnny Cash.

I remember a Christmas when I got a little guitar and pretended I was Johnny Cash. That was a good memory.

I do remember we had a big, red station wagon. It was fun when we went camping, as my parents made a bed in the back for me to sleep in for the drive up to Kill Bear Park.

My grandfather, of whom I have a few distinct memories, had a speed boat that we could take out to go water skiing. I don't remember ever trying water skiing myself, but I remember it was fun watching some older siblings and family members do it.

This one time, when we were on the speedboat, my mom fell overboard. That was a very intense moment for me. She panicked because she thought she was going to drown, as she couldn't swim, but my Aunt Cathy told her that she was on a sandbar and could stand up.

These are just some of the damaging memories that have really stuck with me over the years. Watching my family joke about scary things like drowning or my dad yelling out loud that he was going to kill me.

## **My Perfect Storm**

Only during the later years of my life did I really begin to realize the negative impact it had on me and my trust in others.

### **I can do this**

When I was about four or five years old, I was left at home with my siblings while my mom had gone shopping at the Loblaws grocery store. I was scared in the house, so I left on my own and walked to the store. I knew I could find my way, but it was longer than I thought. When I got there, my mom was very angry that I walked all by myself.

### **I'm different**

When I started kindergarten, my mom got her first job. She started working in the kitchen of an old age home. Because she was busy working, I had to go to a stranger's house after school. A mother of a kid from my kindergarten class looked after me.

The rules there were way different than at my house, and I didn't want to go. This wasn't fair. This was the first time I felt different than my siblings. They never had to experience being looked after by someone else.

### **Did not say goodbye**

We would go to church on Sunday, with everyone grumbling about not wanting to go but mom made us. She was pretty involved with the church.

I didn't like church except for Easter when we would cook pancakes. We were allowed to eat as much as we wanted. That was a fun memory.

## **My Turbulent, Unpredictable Beginnings**

Mom met some people from the church who had a sailboat. We would go out with them a few times a month. It was a lot of fun.

The big holidays or long weekends were a big thing in our family. We would have other family come to our house, or we would go to their house to have some fun together. In later years, the family get-togethers were called the Brearley or Bronson Brawls.

My aunt Cathy was always extra nice. She would come and get me and take me places to have fun. Aunt Cathy looked after a girl named Tracy, who was my age.

I remember going downhill skiing, and I made the front page of the *Kitchener Harold*, the local newspaper. I got dragged by the T-bar, holding on for dear life, not willing to let go. That's the picture I've included on the front of this book.

## **Grandpa Bill**

As I said before, I do remember having some happy times in my life when I was young. My grandparents, Bill and Amy Bronson, had an in-ground pool.

It was fun going to their house. My grandfather loved family and getting together. Grandpa Bill would always be throwing someone in the pool. They had this ski belt that I would wear. However, if I got turned upside down, I couldn't right myself up.

One day, Grandpa was bent over, doing something in the pool before he was off to work, and at that time, he was wearing a suit for work. At last, I saw my chance to have a little fun with my grandpa like he often did with me. I pushed him into the pool. He was angry. I

## **My Perfect Storm**

knew I was going to get it. I ran. He chased me and was yelling. I was scared and confused because he threw everyone else in the pool.

My grandmother came to my rescue. She got between my grandfather and me and protected me from him.

These types of incidents were all very confusing to my understanding of what love really was. They all seemed to compound in me, and for some reason, the negative memories far outweighed the positive ones. They helped create the person I thought I was and how I was to show up in this life.

## **Grammy**

When I was six, my grandmother (Grammy) had become ill all of a sudden. I remember being in the hallway at the hospital, left all alone. I didn't know what was going on. I was just so confused. No one was telling me anything.

My parents decided not to let me see my grandmother. I don't know whether they did it out of concern for me and protecting me from seeing my grandmother dying or they just didn't care. However, I remember thinking this was just not fair. My grandmother passed away. I think this is when things started to really go south. Her passing rocked the family.

I was really starting to feel like a nobody. I remember during one of our dinners, I raised my voice to be heard, and almost in unison, everyone said, "Shut up."

Being spanked was a big form of punishment, mostly from my dad. My brothers fought all the time. Ted would tease and bully me and

## **My Turbulent, Unpredictable Beginnings**

call me stupid. Being the youngest in the family, I felt like all I was doing was surviving.

### **The accident**

When I was seven, I played with the kids who lived behind us. One of the kids was a girl. I remember teasing her by stealing her skipping rope. She went to tell her mom. I dropped the rope and ran into a car as I was running across the street. I was dragged 40 yards. I sustained multiple fractures on both legs, my left arm was broken, my lung had collapsed, and I had a fractured skull. The doctors told my parents to start making arrangements for me as I may not make it.

When this accident happened, my grandfather had just gotten remarried to Bernice, and he was on his honeymoon. Things were not looking good for me, and it was decided not to tell my grandfather till he got home from his honeymoon.

Bernice and Grandpa came to the hospital from the airport. I was told he yelled, "Get up and at 'em, boy." He yelled at me that this was not my time to die. Apparently, this is when I had my turnaround and started to improve.

## **My Perfect Storm**



Scott in the hospital at age 7  
with his Grandfather's glasses on.

## **Oozing and ice cream**

I remember being in the emergency department at the hospital. I was in traction with my legs in the air with those rubber tensor bandages wrapped around a steel pole, so I wasn't able to move.



## **My Turbulent, Unpredictable Beginnings**

There were tubes in my right arm and ooze coming out from the incision made during my lung surgery.

There was a male nurse. I remember thinking, *a male nurse, that's funny*. I thought only women were nurses. He brought me ice cream.

After this, my memory is a little hazy. I do remember lots of pain and the full cast from my hips to my toes.

The stench and whatever oozed from my lungs was nasty. I would wipe it with Kleenex. The nurses would give me hell, saying it would get infected if I kept it up.

At some point, I was able to go home, and the Red Cross loaned us a hospital bed that I could keep in my bedroom.

I was now in the newspaper again for another thing that, however you looked at it, was drawing attention to my mistakes.

## **Bedridden at home**

My dad, as the maintenance man at Butler Manufacturing, came home one day with a TV from the people who worked with him. I guess they all chipped in and thought it would be helpful since I had to stay in bed to recover.

A girl from school and her little sister came over to see me. They wanted to sign my cast, so the little sister pulled the blanket down and exposed my privates to them. I was so embarrassed. I had a crush on the girl, and now she saw me naked.

## **My Perfect Storm**

At some point, I had gained some of my strength back. My brother Ted carried me downstairs. He was being nice, I guess, to get me out of my bedroom since I was still stuck in the cast.

My mom came home from work and went to see me in my room and freaked out because I wasn't there. She yelled and was frantically looking for me even though I was just downstairs watching T.V.

At the time, I remember being excited about being out of my room. I thought my mom should be happy for me because I was getting better. From the work I have done over the past few years, I realize that it was times like this when these overreactions contributed to my path of destruction. I felt like I wasn't good enough or I was making poor choices.

### **Starting to heal**

The girl that drove the car I ran into was only 16 and had just gotten her licence. Her family felt bad for me, so when they later went on a trip to Disneyland, they brought me back lots of cool things. Some Mickey Mouse stuff and a fun kaleidoscope.

## **My Turbulent, Unpredictable Beginnings**



Scott smiling while in the hospital after his major accident.

After some time at home with the cast from my waist down, it was time to go back to the hospital to have the cast removed, which hurt a lot. My legs were all covered in cotton. They kept me for a while. I had to have lots of baths to get all the cotton off my legs. I was embarrassed that the nurses had seen me naked.

I thought I would be able to walk right away, but I was bedridden in the hospital and needed therapy to learn how to walk again. I remember a boy who kept jumping all over my bed and over my sore legs in the kids' playroom. It was painful, and I can't remember what was done about it; I just remember him doing lots of jumping on me.

## **My Perfect Storm**

The therapist started me on crutches. When my parents came to visit, I was in the hallway with the nurse, practicing walking. I was proud I was on my feet again, even if I was walking with crutches. I thought I could show my parents how strong I was and lifted both crutches off the ground, and bam—I was on the floor. I was so embarrassed. My stupid button was pressed again.



## CHAPTER 2

# Glimpses of Calm in the Shit Storm

### School

Shortly after learning how to use the crutches, I got to go home. I still couldn't walk very well, but by this time, it was winter, and the school wanted me to attend, as I had missed a lot. So, the teachers came to my house and pulled me through the snow to school on a sled.

## **My Perfect Storm**



Scott coming home after his cast was removed  
from his major car accident at age 7.

I had a wheelchair at school. They thought it would be best for me to move up a grade to stay with my friends.

At home, I learned how to walk slowly. I would go from door frame to door frame to the couch to the counter.

## **Summer finally came**

My brother, Gary, was working for some guy named Ken Kelly, who had a son, Mathew, who was younger than me. Gary took me to play with him all the time. I was able to walk at this point, but I had weak legs.

They got me a trike to ride, as I could no longer ride a two-wheeler. I didn't have the strength in my legs. I was embarrassed; not only did I have to play with younger kids, but now I was on a trike.

I do remember going to Matthew's house, where the kids could do whatever they wanted. There was no yelling, just having fun. We could go on the roof of their house and play, and nothing was said.

Lady, our family dog, would go with us. When they fed their dog, King, he would stand and watch Lady eat till she had her fill, and then King would eat.

Gary's boss had a hockey school. He tried talking to my mom into letting me skate. She wouldn't let me, which I wasn't happy about. I guess my mom was scared I would get hurt again.

## **Tim, Tom, and Len**

When school started up again, they decided to make me do grade three again. Grade three is where I met Tim, Tom, and Len.

I started getting in trouble for farting in class and acting out. I would be sent to stand in the hallway alot.

I started teasing the 'special' kids and was getting into fights.

## **My Perfect Storm**

I felt like I didn't fit in.

The school started making me go to special education classes. The teacher there was great, and he would give us Lifesaver candies all the time.

### **The many accidents**

Gary took me to Bronte Creek, and I jumped off the concrete pillars into the river on the side that was shallow. I cut my foot open and had to get stitches. I think this was the first time I went to the hospital for stitches.

After that, I spent a lot of time in and out of the hospital for stitches. At one point, they called the cops on my dad to question him about my injuries and see if it was from abuse at home or not. Back then, this wasn't done very much. People minded their own affairs.

At home, there was lots of drinking and fighting or arguing. It seemed like everything revolved around drinking when the families got together. Almost all my aunts and uncles drank.

### **Uncle Joe**

My dad's brother, Uncle Joe, moved back from Scotland, as he was living there for some time. I had never met Uncle Joe.

Uncle Joe was a lot of fun. He was cool, a little bit of a rebel, which I liked. Uncle Joe had met Sandra in Scotland, and she came later to Canada and, of course, had soon become my aunt. I liked Aunt Sandra. It was fun to tease her. She spoke funny (that Scottish accent)



## **Glimpses of Calm in the Shit Storm**

and was almost as small as me! She actually wore some of my shoes and clothes when she first got to Canada.

We had lots of family time with Uncle Joe and Aunt Sandra. Aunt Sandra made the best roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. This was a fun time of my life.

### **Backyard pool**

My parents decided to put a pool in our backyard to give me some fun, physical activity after coming home from the hospital, or at least that was what I was told. I kind of remember there being a family vote about a pool or getting a cottage. I was the only one who voted cottage, as the other siblings were older and wanted to hang with friends, not family. I felt burned. Now, we wouldn't spend our summers camping as much, or that's what I thought.

We were putting a big deck around the pool, so Uncle Joe was using the table saw and cut his hand really badly. Apparently, he cut himself stopping me because my hand was close to being cut by the table saw.

I was really confused because my Uncle Joe was hurt, and my grandfather was mad and pounding the table. Memories like this create a lot of confusion for me. One must remember there was lots of drinking going on.

Shortly after this incident with Uncle Joe, my grandfather (dad's dad) died. I don't remember much about this death.

## **My Perfect Storm**

### **Grandmother, dad, and more stitches**

I went with my dad to help my grandmother with yard work, and all she did was complain that I broke stuff both times I went to help her. I later refused to go see her.

We had BBQs all the time in the summer, and family would always come. It was fun.

It seemed like all of a sudden, mom started complaining more about how much dad was smoking and drinking. I remember thinking *if she would just not say anything, there would be no fights.*

I was out with a friend one day, and we swapped bikes. I really liked his bike—it was super fast. My friend had this rat trap for books on the back of his bike. We stopped, and I got too close to a wire sticking out of the rat trap, so it got hooked into my knee. If I recall, my friend ran home to get dad, and dad came and managed to get it out, but of course, I had to go get more stitches.

I remember when my dad was running across the field to get to me and pull my leg off the wire. I remember that this act of running actually gave me a sense of feeling cared for and loved, which was a rare occurrence, that's for sure.

### **Fun in the pool**

We liked to have inner tube fights in the pool where we would stand on the tube and rock it till the other person fell off. Also, the pool was round, and we would walk around faster and faster, making it like a whirlpool to the point that no one could even stand up. These were a few fun memories I have of my childhood.

## **Glimpses of Calm in the Shit Storm**

A camping trip was planned, but Gary, Lorie, and Doug were old enough to stay home, and they didn't want to go, so my parents, Ted and I went to a spot just outside of Toronto.

I was toasting a marshmallow, and when it caught on fire, I quickly blew on it. It slid off the stick and splattered all over my face. The burn on my face was taken care of, but when I went to bed in the tent, I saw sparks fly from the fire. I thought the tent was going to burn down. This was scary, and I never really felt like my parents cared for me.

### **Dad**

I remember going fishing once with my dad up to Trenton. I felt special because it was just him and I. It was fun. I learned a little about the Trent Canal and got some much-needed time with just my dad. He was handy with stuff and taught me how to use power tools at a young age.

We made this little toy boat together. It felt good doing what felt like 'normal' stuff with my dad.

My dad did have a great garden full of strawberries, raspberries, and a lot of different kinds of veggies.

Dad was always busy working on something. He built a bathroom/laundry room downstairs in our house.

Dad's yard always had to be perfect. He was always cutting grass and pulling weeds.

And there was always drinking. Mom and dad would argue a lot about his drinking and smoking cigarettes.

## **My Perfect Storm**

My dad was pretty violent at times. I always thought if we just left him alone, he would be fine.

### **Mom**

My mom had this big, blue car that she would drive to see her family in Stansted, Québec. We would go there and camp on this cool lake on the border of Vermont. We'd swim and have a lot of fun.

We brought home this huge dining room table from mom's aunt's house in Québec, and they had it refinished. It was a family heirloom.

### **The good guy**

Lorie, my sister, dated this guy named Bruce. He was around all the time. He was Lorie's first boyfriend (from what I remember). He was fun, and everybody liked him.

When they broke up, I was confused. They seemed happy, and Bruce was liked by my family, so I wondered why he didn't stay with Lorie. I was young, but I was probably hoping this good guy would have stayed.

### **The bloody nose**

When I was nine, my older brother Gary used his boss's van to take a bunch of us to the drive-in to see the movie *Jaws*. It was great.

I remember sitting on Gary's lap, and there was this intense part of the movie when the scientist (played by Richard Dreyfuss) went diving under a sunken boat in the middle of the night and pulled a shark's

## **Glimpses of Calm in the Shit Storm**

tooth out of the boat. Then, the head of the dead fisherman floated right out in front of him. I jumped back and gave Gary a bloody nose. Gary was focused on stopping his nose from bleeding, so he didn't get upset with me.

From that movie, I was even scared to swim in my pool, let alone open water. I didn't let anyone else know I was scared because that meant I would not be allowed to watch any other scary movies, and I would be teased like crazy.

### **Thanks, dad**

I think I started Cub Scouts around this time, following in my brother Ted's footsteps. It was fun learning knots and going out in nature.

The only thing about all the fun stuff in Cub Scouts was that I was accident-prone, and if I was active, I was more than likely going to need stitches.

I went to Cub Scouts for about a year or two, but I was eventually kicked out. I couldn't go back unless my dad was involved. Well, that didn't happen, so I never went back.

### **Just not a loving family**

Like I said, I was very accident-prone. I remember cutting my chin open on the mailbox hook and on the step railing. I'm not sure which one was first, but I had stitches both times.

I remember when I did this, I went into the dining room and said, "I think I need a bandaid," as I was bleeding badly. At that exact time,

## **My Perfect Storm**

Lorie was about to go to her swim meet, so my mom made me go to the swim meet first, then to the hospital. The reminder that I wasn't really that important was something I felt often.

I remember feeling like I wanted to get even with my older siblings. They always bullied me and picked on me. So, I got this great idea that I did often. I deliberately opened a cupboard door so they would hit their head or walk into the door and then claim I didn't see them.

I remember being in Gary's car with him and his friend Scott. We drove by some other car, and I heard that Gary had ripped somebody off, so he had to duck down to not be seen. It was my job to sit by the window so Gary wouldn't be seen.

It was the summer of 1975, and Gary started talking about going to Calgary to work. Calgary seemed so far away. Aunt Cathy was also moving to California so she could attend school.

We had a big barbeque before they both left, and I only remember thinking I didn't want them to go. I was feeling a bit lonely and scared as I often felt like it was only Gary who protected me. He gave me some solace in living with this f'd up family of mine.

Aunt Cathy also gave me some reprieve. She would take me on small trips, and we would have fun. She would take me downhill skiing or just come pick me up for the weekend. I just knew I was safe, loved, and cared for when I was with her. I would miss her.

At this point in my life, I wasn't used to change and didn't like it. Why did Gary and Cathy have to move away?