

FROM MISCHIEF TO GOOD WILL

BY

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CHAPTER 1

He was born August 5, 1908 on a farm near the town of Forgan in Beaver County Oklahoma. He was the first, and only, child of James Bilbro and Lillie Marvel Bilbro; they named him “Jim.” He was a healthy little guy and was a very good baby.

His parents were both Christians and were determined to bring Jim up in a Christian home. They did their best to keep Jim in line until he was grown and became aware of his need to become a Christian. Their prayers were answered, but not until Jim became a grown man. In the meantime, Jim was an ornery, but lovable, family member.

Jim started to the little country school in 1914. The school was named “Union” and was about one mile west of where he was born. He was a smart child and made good grades. However, he tended to be a little ornery, and consequently he got spankings by the teacher, Mrs. Groves. She was really a very soft-hearted lady and her spankings did not usually result in tears. Also, periodically she would bring little trinkets to school and give one to each pupil.

The school was a grade school and had classes from first grade to eighth grade; generally the number of students was less than fifteen. And when pupils graduated from the eighth grade, they were automatically transferred to the Forgan School which had twelve grades, from first grade through senior high.

Jim started to Forgan high school at age fourteen. He was very academically oriented and made good grades. But he still had a trend toward orneriness; and he had several friends that had the same trend.

The first prank the culprits pulled was putting a horny toad in the center drawer of the English teacher, Mrs. Wilson. When she opened the drawer the horny toad jumped out into her lap. She screamed loudly and jumped out of her chair; the students laughed in an uproar.

When the teacher got her wits back, she looked over the students with a gleam in her eye, and said in a loud and high pitched voice, “Who’s guilty of that horrible prank?”

The students got as quiet as a mouse, and the girls all turned and looked at the twelve boys who were sitting in the two back rows of the class. Mrs. Wilson took that to mean that the boys were the guilty ones. So she said, “All you boys go into Mr. Carper’s office—right now!”

The boys looked at each other, then slowly stood up and marched into the superintendent’s office with Mrs. Wilson right behind them.

Mr. Carper looked up from his desk, and asked quite gruffly, “What’s the meaning of this?”

Mrs. Wilson immediately answered with anger in her high-pitched voice. “These boys put a horny toad in my desk, and it jumped out into my lap!”

Mr. Carper had a real struggle of trying not to laugh as he pictured the episode in his mind. Then he said, “You scoundrels’ should be ashamed for pulling such a prank. Some of you may not be guilty of being in on this prank, but to be sure I get the guilty ones I’m going to punish all twelve of you. Mrs. Wilson, would you please go back to your classroom while I give these boys a little talking to?” She immediately looked the boys over with a smirk and a “now you’ll get it” look on her face; then she marched out and closed the door.

“Now young men I’m going to swat your rears with my special paddle board. Then I want you to go back to the class room, and each of you apologize to Mrs. Wilson. Then you can take your seats at the back of the room. I’ll be standing in the doorway watching you while you do as I have just told you to do.”

Then Mr. Carper got his paddle board out of his clothes closet and slowly went around the room giving each boy a swat on the buttocks. It was a strong swat, strong enough to bring a large bruise. But Mr. Carper made a mistake in being so tough on the boys, especially the innocent ones;—vengeance was coming!

The boys marched into the classroom one at a time; and each boy said “I’m sorry” as they passed Mrs. Wilson’s who was seated at her desk. (Jim had been the prankster who brought the horny toad and put it into the teacher’s desk, but no one saw him do it.) Jim felt sorry for the other boys and determined that he would repay Mr. Carper because it was not the first time he had been tough on the boys.

Well, the boys knew that the last day of having Mr. Carper around was just a few days away. He had taken a job as superintendent in a South Dakota school.

So Jim thought the boys should give him a going away “present” to get more than even with him for the extremely hard whippings he had given them for pranks they committed, or some they had not committed.

It was the last day of school, and the last day for Mr. Carper. And Jim felt like the senior boys needed to send him away with something to remember them by. So he got the boys to give him a dollar apiece to buy a log chain. That way every boy could, in years to come, have a memory of their part in this final, get-even stunt against Mr. Carper.

Mr. Carper always parked his car underneath the branches of a big tree on the edge of the school house yard. So Jim bought a heavy-duty log chain that was thirty feet long. He fastened one end of it to the rear axle of Mr. Carper’s car, and he fastened the other end of the chain to the near-by tree; there was a lot of slack in the chain.

When Mr. Carper got ready to go home for his last dinner before leaving for South Dakota, he walked out to his car and began cranking it.

The boys were playing tag football on the playground where the car was parked. So when he started cranking, the boys stopped playing football and watched him because they wanted to see how he reacted when his car got to the end of the chain.

He cranked the Model T Ford and got it started. Then he climbed into the cab, reved up the motor, and pushed down on the pedal that started the car moving rapidly forward. When the car reached the end of the chain, it stopped abruptly and completely. Mr. Carper was thrown forward into the steering wheel; he was not really injured, but it did knock all of the wind out of him and bruise his ribs.

He was mad as a hornet and when he got his breath back he jumped out of the Model T and shouted at the boys, "You ornery devils, I'll see to it that you get properly punished for your little stunt!" He detached the chain from the axle, got back into the car, and drove home.

When he returned from his dinner he was still boiling mad. But unfortunately for him, the seniors had finished their final test and had already gone home.

So Mr. Carper left Forgan with a sore body and with a bad memory of a stunt and the boys who engineered it.

CHAPTER 2

Mr. Carper's replacement, Mr. Norman Hoover, was not a very good athlete. But he did allow both the boys and girls to play basketball—under very peculiar rules.

But the first thing he did was find out who of the ten boys smoked. And he found out that most of them were smokers; so he told them that if they didn't quit smoking they were not to come out for practice. Jim was a good basketball player and went out for practice regularly—and he did not smoke.

Since Mr. Hoover was not much on sports, he set up the basketball practices in a strange way: the boys would practice at one o'clock on Monday and Wednesday, and the girls would practice at one o'clock on Tuesday and Thursday; there was no practice on Friday.

On one Monday in the fall when it was rather cold, some of the boys went driving during the noon hour with the car windows rolled up. Some of them were smoking, but Jim was not.

At one o'clock the boys went to the gym to practice. As usual, Jim put on his trunks and hurried onto the gym floor. A few minutes later Mr. Hoover came over to Jim and said, "Mr. Bryon, I want to see you in the dressing room, right now! Jim marched to the dressing room wondering what he had done wrong.

When they got into the dressing room, Mr. Hoover immediately said in a very tough voice, "Mr. Bryon, did you not hear me tell you boys if you smoked you were not to come out for basketball?"

Jim answered, "Yes, Mr. Hoover, I heard you, but I have not been smoking."

Then Mr. Hoover said in a very angry tone, "Are you calling me a liar?"

Jim said, "No sir, but I have not been smoking."

Mr. Hoover did not give Jim a chance to explain that he had been in a car with some boys who were smoking. He just said, "All right, you can put your clothes back on and go to the study hall. And if you decide to quit smoking, and you come to me and apologize for calling me a liar, then I might let you come out again for basketball." Then he turned, went back to the basketball court, and resumed the practicing of the rest of the boys.

Jim just stood there for a moment, then a wave of rebellion and hatred passed over him, and he said to himself, "Mr. Hoover, it will be a cold day in hell before I come to you and apologize for something that I'm not guilty of." War had been declared, and Mr. Hoover was not going to win it! Jim's first offensive battle soon came to pass.

Three nights later Jim was in town about midnight after a heavy rain. But the rain had ceased, and so had the traffic. The road next to the baseball field was paved and the rainwater had run off of it and it was dry; but the field was still soaking wet.

So Jim went to the end of the block south of the field, reved up the engine with his foot on the clutch, and with the transmission in low gear; then he jerked his foot off the clutch and shoved the throttle to the floor-board. He was going about twenty miles per hour and gathering speed when he got to the field. Then he jerked the steering wheel to the left and the car went out onto the muddy field, skidding and spinning the rear wheels. His plan was not to leave any tire tracks on the field that could be identified. So he raced around in circles with the rear wheels spinning and the front wheels sliding.

When he finished his wild driving, he pulled back onto the paved road, leaving the field a muddy mess. Then quite satisfied with his mud-churning activity, he drove home and went to bed.

The next morning Mr. Hoover drove past the churned up baseball field and immediately went into a wild fit. He knew very well that Jim had done the “dirty” work, but he also knew that there was no way he could prove it because there were no identifiable tire tracks; and this added to his anger.

Jim was very pleased with the results of his plowing up the ball field and was tempted to brag about it, but he knew that could result in his getting some severe punishment.

Mr. Hoover had to wait five days for the muddy field to dry enough that it could be smoothed with a drag. Then he borrowed a drag from Mr. Miller and spent several hours trying to get the field sufficiently smoothed. He was finally satisfied with the job, and he returned the drag to Mr. Miller. The field may have been smoothed over, but Mr. Hoover's anger was not!

Jim was pleased with the results of his roughing up the baseball field, but he was by no means through harassing Mr. Hoover; and he never passed up a chance to make him look like an ignoramus

One cold morning Jim was standing by the steam radiator with Mr. Hoover and several high school students; they were discussing the reason why it got cold in the winter.

Mr. Hoover said with a laugh, “Any idiot should know why that happens. In the winter the sun is further away from the earth.”

Jim immediately saw an opportunity to make Mr. Hoover look like an idiot; so he said, “No, Mr. Hoover, it gets colder in the winter because the sun is at a different angle than it is in the summer.”

Mr. Hoover turned red in the face because he was very angry that Jim had contradicted him to make him look like “an idiot.” And he was glad the bell began

to ring for the students to go to their classrooms, because that gave him a good reason to rush to his office; and he hoped the subject about the way the sun cooled the earth would never be brought up again.

But the next morning Jim took to school a Book of Knowledge in which a page was written that said exactly what he had said to Mr. Hoover. So he showed the page to Mr. Hoover and the students that were standing close by. Mr. Hoover turned very red in the face from his anger and embarrassment. He never said a word; he just handed the book back to Jim and quickly walked to his office.

The students twittered and quietly laughed a little bit; then the bell rang and they went to their seats. Jim was delighted, smiled, and said to himself, "Another victory for Jim!"

CHAPTER 3

Mr. Hoover was always looking for ways to get even with Jim, and such an opportunity occurred one day when Jim pulled a real bone-head in his English class. The teacher, Mrs. Langley, was reading them a play written by Shakespeare, and the play had in it special sound effects off stage.

So Jim whispered to Lynn, who was sitting behind him: “Lynn, the next time it calls for a scream, punch me with your pencil, and I’ll scream.”

Just a few minutes later the play called for another scream; so Lynn punched Jim hard with the point of his pencil. It hurt, and Jim really screamed. It scared Mrs. Langley clear out of her chair! She quickly regained her composure and screamed in a very angry voice, “You two boys go to the study hall, right now!” So Jim and Lynn grabbed their books and hustled to the study hall; there was no one there.

Then Jim said, “Lynn, if Mr. Hoover should find us in here, we will be in big trouble. So why don’t we go to the boys’ restroom until class ends.” Lynn thought that was a good idea, so they quickly hurried down the hall to it.

Unfortunately for them, Mrs. Langley went to the library to get a book, and glanced into the study hall. Since she did not see the boys there, she blew her stack again and went to find Mr. Hoover.

She found him and told him how Jim had screamed in her classroom when Lynn jabbed him with a pencil point. Then she told him she had sent them to the study hall, but they had not stayed there.

So he said to her, “I’ll gladly take care of those two loud mouthed brats.” He immediately headed down the hall toward the boys’ restroom because he knew it was the only place they could hide; he was really relishing the opportunity to “break it off” in those two ornery brats.

He was making a noise walking that sounded like a charging elephant because the floor in the hall was the wooden ceiling for his residence in the basement.

The boys heard the noise in the hall getting louder and louder and immediately they realized they had no place to go—they were trapped.

Mr. Hoover marched through the door to the boys’ restroom and said in a loud, vengeful voice, “You two boys get your books and go home, and don’t come back!”

Jim said in a defiant voice, “That suits me just fine, I hate school anyway,” and he started for the door.

Evidently, Mr. Hoover quickly realized he had overstepped his authority, so he said in a snappish voice, “Well, you two troublemakers can stay, but you will get an F every week until the semester ends. If you pass, fine; if you don’t pass you will have to take the class over again;” and he turned and stomped away.

Jim passed the course with a D, but Lynn got an F and had to take the class over again. Jim felt very sorry for Lynn because he realized he was the reason Lynn flunked.

A little bit later Jim had an opportunity to once again challenge Mr. Hoover; the subject was jet propulsion. Mr. Hoover and several students were standing by the radiator with Jim, discussing whether or not a man would one day stand on the moon. Then with a proud voice, Mr. Hoover stated, "Man will never stand on the moon because jet propulsion will never work out in the atmosphere because it will have no air to push against."

Jim said, "Jet propulsion will work out there because the jets will push against their own jet stream."

Mr. Hoover disputed Jim's statement but Jim would not argue with him; he felt it would be useless. (But Jim was right. A few years later two Astronauts walked on the moon, and Jim said to himself: "Jim boy, you were right again.")

CHAPTER 4

Despite all of his troubles, Jim finished high school at the top of his class. This resulted in his getting a scholarship at Oklahoma Panhandle State University at Goodwell where he majored in Agricultural Science and Agriculture Engineering.

Jim was a brilliant student and always at the top of his class. He was also a very handsome young man, so he had no problem in getting a date.

He dated many of the girls but never found one that really held his interest very long. But finally he found a girl that held his interest very strongly. Her name was Valarie Cunningham and she was majoring in Horticulture; her plan was to become a teacher in high schools.

For the first date, Jim asked Valarie if she would go with him to the movie at the Campus Theater, and she said she would. Then after the movie ended he took her to the Campus Social Center and bought her a cup of coffee and a doughnut.

While they were sipping coffee and enjoying their doughnut, Jim noticed that Valarie was a little shy and didn't do a lot of talking.

So Jim decided he would take the responsibility for the talking; so he asked her if she would like to hear the story of his life. She said she would like to hear it, so he started the story.

“Valarie, I was born and raised in the country a couple of miles from Forgan in the Oklahoma Panhandle. My dad, George, was a farmer and my mother, Lillie, was a good housekeeper and a good mother.

“My parents were both Christians and saw to it that I got the proper kind of upbringing. Unfortunately, both my parents were killed in a car wreck the summer after I graduated from high school. So I was taken in by my Uncle Buck Barker who is a rancher and farmer of several hundred acres of land near Beaver, which is seven miles south of Forgan.

“I love my Uncle Buck and Aunt Alice, so I moved in with them and went to work helping Uncle Buck with his farming and ranching; so I learned a lot about farming and ranching and also about driving a tractor and running a combine.

“When fall came I started to college at Goodwell, and double-majored in Agricultural Science and Agriculture Engineering. But during any vacation time I would go to Uncle Buck's place and work for him.

“As strange as it might seem, going to college has been very important and rewarding to me. But the most important reward I got for starting to college was meeting you.” Valarie looked a little embarrassed, but she felt very honored.

Jim continued his talking: “And now, Valarie, would you please tell me all about you life and your family?”

Valarie was a little reluctant to do so, but with a little encouragement from Jim, she began her story.

CHAPTER 5

“I was born in Philadelphia, but shortly after my birth, my parents moved to Guymon, Oklahoma. Philadelphia was just too big and too crowded for them.

“My father, Carl, is a lawyer, and my mother, Bessie, is his secretary. They are church-going Christians and they have raised me in a Christian atmosphere.

“After I finished high school, I entered college here at Goodwell and I am majoring in Mathematics and Financial Management.

“Bowling was my favorite activity, but I never got to be very good at it.

“Oh incidentally, Jim, I am an only child.” Then after a brief pause she said, “Well, I guess that is pretty much the story of my life.”

Jim said, fibbing just a little bit: “Valarie, the story of your life was very interesting; and I thank you for sharing it with me. Now how about this for a coincidence: bowling is my favorite activity also!”

Then Valarie smiled and said, “We must go bowling one of these evenings.” So they went bowling several times, and Jim enjoyed every minute of being with Valarie. Consequently, the evening for their eighth date was very significant; it was the start of a romance for Jim and Valarie.

Jim was soon asking her for a date very frequently. So they got a copy of each other’s schedule, and marked them to indicate when they could get together. Thus Jim no longer had to ask Valarie for a date. All he had to do was check the copy of her schedule to see if she was in class. If she wasn’t, he knew she would be expecting him to come to the girls’ dormitory to get her.

Their liking for each other turned into loving each other, and they had to use a lot of self-discipline in order to study instead of constant dating. But the self-discipline paid off; their grades continued to be very good, and they graduated at the top of their class.

Then Valarie came up with a question: “How are we going to stay together now?” Fortunately, Jim came up with a good solution. “Why don’t we get married today and move in with Uncle Buck and Aunt Alice?” Valarie thought that was a good idea.

So they went to a Justice of Peace and got married. Then they started their drive to the Barkers to announce their marriage.

Jim said, “I’m sure Uncle Buck and Aunt Alice will be delighted to meet my new bride, and I’m also sure that Uncle Buck will be glad to give us time for a honeymoon before harvest.”

Valarie smiled a happy smile and said, “Jim, I am so glad you have a plan, and I’m especially looking forward to the honeymoon!”

Jim pulled her tightly against his body, smiled, and then said with a voice of great anticipation: “So am I!”

CHAPTER 6

When they arrived at the Barkers Jim pulled up in front of the house and parked, then they went up to the house and rang the door bell.

In just a moment, Aunt Alice opened the door. Jim hugged her and then introduced Valarie. Buck showed up at that moment and introduced himself to Valarie.

Buck and Alice were very pleased with the couple because they saw the light of great love in their faces.

After Buck and Alice got acquainted with Valarie that evening, Jim asked Buck if it would be all right for them to take a two-week honeymoon. Buck said that would be fine, but he would like for them to be back within two weeks, as by then the wheat should be ready to harvest.

That night they slept in the guest bedroom, and in the morning they ate breakfast with Buck and Alice; then they left for Ruidoso for their honeymoon.

CHAPTER 7

Neither one of them had ever been to Ruidoso before, but they had heard a lot of stories about how beautiful the area was.

They rented a cabin, moved their suitcases into it, and unpacked them. Then for their first sight-seeing trip, they went up to a Fire Lookout near the top of a mountain. Then with the binoculars they looked at the scenery in all directions for many miles around the country.

They also took a lot of pictures of the country. Their camera was time-release, and they had a tripod for it; so they also took pictures with them standing with their arms around each other and with beautiful scenery as a background.

After spending a few days around Ruidoso and the surrounding mountains, they traveled up to a little town about thirty miles north of Ruidoso. The town was named Bonnevillie after Billy the Kid (William Bonny) who was buried there.

The little town had many small stores where you could eat, buy various souvenirs, or visit the county jail from which Billy the Kid had at one time escaped.

Jim and Valarie wandered through the town for about two hours, and then drove back to Ruidoso. They had a leisurely supper, and then went back to the cabin. After an evening of love making, they retired for the night.

The next day they decided maybe they should return to Buck's home, and spend the night in the guest room there. It was a good thing they did, because wheat harvest was going to start earlier than Buck had anticipated.

CHAPTER 8

The next morning Buck greeted them at the breakfast table, and said, "I'm glad you youngsters came back yesterday because the wheat has ripened earlier than I had figured it would. In fact, I believe we will be able to start harvesting sometime this week. In the meantime we can get all of the equipment ready for the harvest.

"Jim, you can help me get the combines and trucks ready to go. They will all need oil changes and the two combines will need both oil changes and greasing.

"And Valarie, I would like for you to help Alice get the house all cleaned up, and the kitchen prepared for cooking in large amounts. We will have four men employed for the harvest, and they all eat like starving bears."

Valarie was especially anxious to get things underway as she had never been in a harvest. In fact she had never even seen a harvest. She also had to learn several things about housekeeping and cooking as she had never had to do either of them. But she did learn fast, and Alice was very thankful to have her as a helper.

Alice also took a real liking to her and wished that Valarie could be her daughter. Alice and Buck were unable to have a family as Alice had to have her ovaries removed before she got married. So her hope now was that Jim and Valarie would provide her with some grandchildren.

In three days the wheat was ready to harvest, and all the equipment was ready. Jim operated one combine and Buck operated the other one.

The wheat was producing over sixty bushels per acre, and the price of wheat was very high, three dollars per bushel.

Considering all factors, the bushel price, the yield, and the large number of acres, Buck made almost a million dollars net profit from the wheat crop.

He believed that Valarie and Jim had been very good helpers and deserved to be paid accordingly. So he gave them two-hundred-thousand dollars for their help.

They knew that a big part of that amount was given to them because they were very special youngsters to him and Alice; and Valarie and Jim were very grateful for the extra money and the love of Buck and Alice.

CHAPTER 9

Jim and Valarie continued to work for Buck and Alice for two years. Then one day Valarie said, “Jim, as much as I love Uncle Buck and Aunt Alice, I feel like we are not using any of our college training. I feel like we should consider doing something that will benefit mankind in someplace; South Africa for example. What do you think?”

Jim thought about it for a few moments, and then replied, “Yes, my beloved wife, I feel like that would be a good place to start. But before we do that, I think we should ask Uncle Buck and Aunt Alice what they think about our going overseas to help the people in some poor country, like South Africa.”

They got with them and told them what they were thinking about doing. Both Buck and Alice were proud of them for planning to help some poor Africans.

Alice said, “We will certainly miss you two because you have become our two children, but we believe it is the Lord's will that you go overseas to help some very poor people.”

The next Saturday Jim and Valarie drove into Beaver and went to the cafeteria there; they got their plates filled and then walked across the room and sat down at a table.

A few moments later Jim spotted a young man going through the serving line whose skin was fairly dark, but his features were definitely Caucasian. He pointed him out to Valarie, and she said, “How about asking him to eat here with us; he looks like a nice fellow.”

So Jim got up from the table and walked over to the young man and asked him to come to their table when he got through the line. He thanked Jim and said he would be glad to join them.

In a few minutes he came over to their table and Jim said, “My name is Jim Bryon and this is my wife, Valarie. Please sit down and tell us about yourself so we can get better acquainted.”

The young man sat down and said, “Thank you for the invitation, Jim. My name is Dave Baker, and I was born in Britannica, a large city in South Africa, but my parents moved back to the states when I was eighteen years old.

“I went through college and got a Masters degree in subjects that would qualify me to teach school, and I am teaching in the high school here in Beaver.”

“And now I imagine you folk are wondering about the color of my skin. Well, right after Dad graduated from Law School here in the States he took a job with a law firm in Britannica. He fell in love with his secretary and married her, a native whose skin is much darker than his.”

Then he laughed and said, “And due to the law of genetics, I have a darker skin than my dad has.”

CHAPTER 10

Jim thanked him for the information, and then he said, “Well, Dave, it was the grace of God that put us together. Valarie and I have been pondering about what we should do to make use of our educations and experiences. So far we have not made any decisive plans, but we have been thinking about going to South Africa to help the people who live around Britannica.

“But now I’m sure we are supposed to go there to work with the poor people. So we would like to know all about the people who live in your former country and the languages they speak.”

Dave responded, “The major language in the country is English because the British were rulers in that country in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; so this is the language primarily spoken by the occupants of Britannica and those living in the first ring around the city.

“The other language that is spoken, mostly by people living outside of the first ring around Britannica, is the native language. It is not really a difficult language to learn because it has very few words compared to English.

“The reason the language has so few words is because the people have only a few things in their lives to talk about; and they are still very “native” in their way of living.

“I have a book that will make it easy for you to learn the language the natives speak; and I have another one that tells all about the country and the people. I will give these two books to you as a special gift from me.”

“Thank you very much, Dave,” Jim said. “Now would you please tell us more about the natives that live outside of Britannica?”

“Well, there are two kinds of natives living outside of Britannica. In the first ring the people are a peaceful kind of natives. Most of them are educated and are employed inside the city; and some even have their own businesses.

“The second ring is strictly made up of natives. They live off the wild edible animals they can trap, wild fruit, and the wild vegetables that grow in small areas where there are few trees and lots of sunshine.”

“Thanks for that very enlightening information, Dave. That second ring sounds like they could use some help, help that Valarie and I could provide.

“We just got a small fortune from my uncle because we worked for him and his wife during wheat harvest. We also got a lot of additional money because they look on us as the children they always wanted, but could never have. So we have plenty of money to use on any project we might undertake.”

Then Dave got up, shook hands with the Bryon’s, and said, “Tomorrow I’ll bring as gifts the two books we discussed today.” They thanked him for the books, and then he headed for his classroom.

CHAPTER 11

The next day David did deliver the two books, and Jim and Valarie immediately started reading them. And from one of the books they learned about a group that was called the Uplifting Foundation. They wanted to know more about it; so they looked in the phone directory and found a number for the Uplifting Foundation. So they called the number, and made an appointment to visit with Mr. Robertson, the Representative of the Organization there in Beaver.

When they got to his office they introduced themselves; then they told him they were interested in doing some work in South Africa that would benefit the poorer natives.

Mr. Robertson, thanked them for their interest; then he told the Bryon's the Foundation had a new office in Britannica, South Africa. He also informed them that the Foundation was planning a huge Experiment Station in the area near the city, and they were looking for someone to be the Manager of it.

So they told Mr. Robertson about their educations and experiences. He was very impressed, and suggested that Jim apply for the job of Manager.

Then Jim asked him to tell them all about the planned project so they could decide whether or not he would want to apply for the Manager position.

“Well, the primary objective of the experiments will be to teach the natives to farm on a large scale so the production of the crops in excess of their needs would enable them to sell some of it. And with the money they would get, they would be able to purchase additional food, other necessities, and even purchase entertainment items such as televisions.”

Then he said, “Jim and Valarie here are some of the things that would be provided for you: a new house furnished with everything to make you very comfortable: a heating and cooling air conditioning system, a television, a private-line telephone, a garden area with a watering system, and a paved road to Britannica.”

Then Jim broke in and asked, “Mr. Robertson, forgive me for asking, but how much will the job pay?”

Mr. Robertson replied, “Jim, I just forgot to tell you that; the pay is two hundred and four thousand dollars a year or seventeen thousand dollars per month.

Jim looked at Valarie and she nodded her head; so Jim said, “Okay Mr. Robertson, I'll gladly take the job—and when do I start?”

“You will start here at eight o'clock tomorrow morning.

“Oh, I almost forgot,” Mr. Robertson said, “They have a small house prepared for a young man they have hired who will be your assistant. His name is John Wilks and he is a graduate from Oklahoma State University.

“John was brought up on a farm so he has had plenty of agricultural training in addition to his college education, so he will be a great assistant for you.

“He will move into his new house the day before you get to Britannica. So he will be able to help you get settled in your new home; and then he will be at your service in the experiments and in anything else you might need him for.

“Also Jim, we will ship all your belongings, including your furniture, by Air Freight and have them put into your house. In addition we will pay for your air flight to Britannica tomorrow. And when you get there, there will be a new pickup truck at the airport for you to drive to your new home.

“We have tickets for your flight tomorrow at seven a.m. And we thank you, Jim, for taking the job because we feel like you will make an excellent Manager; and we believe you will be more than satisfied with your new job.”

Valarie said, “Mr. Robertson, I’m sure I will be happy with our new home and with Jim's new job. And with my training in Horticulture, I should be able to keep us healthy on the foodstuff I will grow in my new garden;” then they all laughed.

Jim and Valarie promptly went home and cleaned out their closets, and put the contents in suitcases. Then they shipped the suitcases and their furniture by Air Express to their new home on the Experiment Station.

CHAPTER 12

The next day they took a plane to Britannica. As soon as they landed, Jim went to the Information desk and got the key to the pickup and drove around to the sidewalk where Valarie was waiting. He stopped and let her climb in; and then they found a grocery store and bought two weeks worth of groceries.

When they got the groceries into the pickup they drove out to their new home using the map that Mr. Robertson had furnished them.

The location of the house and the land for the experiment were just two miles north of Britannica. And fortunately, their new house was already plumbed with potable water from Britannica, and had a working telephone line into the city.

The items they had shipped had already been transported to their new house. So they uncrated them and set them at appropriate places in the house; and soon they had the house in perfect condition for comfortable living.

Valarie glanced around the living room and said, "Isn't this really grand, Jim? We have our own home and everything we need is now in it!"

The next day they drove back to Britannica, purchased clothing more suitable for the environment in South Africa; then they put them in the pickup cab and returned home.

They carried the clothes into the house and put them in their closets. Then the next morning they dressed in some of their new clothing, clothing that was more appropriate for the climate where they were going to be living.

CHAPTER 13

Valarie suggested to Jim, “Why don’t we invite John over for dinner tonight? That would be a good way to really get acquainted with him.” Jim thought that was a good idea, so he walked over to John’s home and knocked on the door. John immediately opened it, extended his hand and said, “You must be Jim Bryon; my name is John Wilks.”

Jim shook his hand and said, “You’re right John, and the wife and I want you to come over for dinner this evening so we can get acquainted. As I am sure you already know, you are going to be my assistant in all the experiments we will be conducting.”

That evening John walked over to Jim's house and knocked on the door. Valarie answered the knock, opened the door, and introduced herself. Then she escorted him to the dining room and indicated a chair at the table for him to sit in. Then she brought in the food, placed it on the table, and sat down with John and Jim.

Jim prayed a short prayer, and then said, “Help yourself, John. If anything is out of your reach, just let me know and I will see that you get it.”

After they had finished with the dessert they moved into the living room and seated themselves in their comfortable padded chairs.

Jim immediately asked the guest a question. “John, would you please give us a little information about yourself, where you were born, and so forth?”

“I’ll be glad to Jim. I was born in Forgan, Oklahoma, a small town seven miles from Beaver. My dad is a farmer, and my mother is a very sweet lady, and a great housekeeper.

“I went to school in Forgan and graduated from high school there. Then I went to Panhandle State University at Goodwell for my Bachelor and Master degrees. I had a double major, Engineering and Agriculture. And after I graduated, I worked for the University until the Uplifting Foundation hired me for the job here.

“I dated a few girls during my years in College, but I never found one that I wanted to marry. But I figure when the right girl comes along, I’ll get me a wife,” he said with a laugh.

Then Jim spoke up again, “John, you grew up just seven miles from where I grew up. I wonder how many times our paths crossed and we didn’t get to know each other. I guess we were both too busy chasing girls to do much socializing. But now we are going to get well acquainted.”

John answered, “Yes, we are Jim, and I’m looking forward to working with you on this project. I believe it’s going to be a really enjoyable experience.”

CHAPTER 14

The next morning Jim went over to John's house to tell him about the experiments. After Jim had finished educating him, John asked what his role was going to be. Jim told him that he would be his associate, and help him with designing and conducting all the experiments.

Jim then shared with him the information he had received from the Uplifting Foundation Representative at Beaver.

"The Representative told me that the experimental areas have already been prepared for us to begin our experiments. The preparation was done by hired professionals, who did a very good job in preparing the various plots of land. They also did a good job making maps to show what was done to prepare each plot, and what experiment should be conducted on it.

"They also put an eight-foot-high fence of woven wire around the entire area where the experiments would be conducted; gates were built wherever they were needed.

"Then they fenced off the two pasture areas with barbed wire and put a windmill and stock tank inside each area.

"And finally they fenced off the area where my wife will be growing the various vegetable plants for testing. They said that this part of South Africa has enough yearly rainfall to grow good vegetables, and any other kind of crop we might want to grow.

"So John, I believe the first thing we should do is to disc-harrow the area where we are going to planting the wheat. Then immediately we'll plant the insect and disease resistant wheat that I got from my Uncle Buck. And when it has grown enough for suitable pasturing, I will buy some livestock to graze on it.

"Then when the wheat begins to make heads, we will take the livestock off of it so it will make enough grain for us to sell some of it, and store the rest for livestock feed and planting seed for next year.

"So you take the tractor and disc-harrow and go over the area where we are going to plant the wheat.

"The tractor and disc-harrow are in the implement storage shed; and the gas tank is located right next to it in case you need to gas up the tractor.

"While you are doing that, I will go to the city and buy the items we will need to use in the various experiments."

Then he went on to tell John, "It won't be too long after we plant the wheat until it will be suitable to graze. And when that time comes we can buy some cattle to put on it." Then he climbed into the pickup truck and headed for the big city.

Jim found an implement store that had all the tools he needed. So he bought them and had them loaded in the pickup bed; then he drove home.

CHAPTER 15

That evening while Jim was working on some financial data, someone knocked on the door; so he went over and opened it. Immediately two men with pistols drawn, shoved him aside and made their way in.

One of the bandits said, “Okay mister, where is your wife? We’re going to kidnap her because we heard that you people have millions of dollars in the bank. So you won’t miss the measly million dollars we want. Now, where is your wife?”

About that time Valarie came in the back door. She was immediately grabbed by one of the bandits. He gagged her and tied her hands together while the other bandit held a gun on her and Jim.

Then the talking bandit said, “If you want your wife to stay alive, here is what you’ve got to do: Go to your bank and get one million dollars in used, unmarked money, ranging in amounts from ten dollars to one-hundred dollars, and have them put all the money in a plastic bag; we will give you until ten o’clock tomorrow morning to get the money.

“Now if you get the money to us earlier than ten o’clock tomorrow that will be fine. But at whatever time before ten o’clock you get the money, bring it home, and put it on the ground at the middle of the west fence just outside the forest.

“We will have two rifle men just inside the forest that will make sure you drop the bag there; and then they will watch you to see that you go back to your house.

“When you do get to the house, our men will pick up the bag and bring it to our camp; then we will check to see if the million dollars is in it. It will take a little while for us to count out the money; and if it’s all there we will bring your wife back to the fence and untie her. But if you try to rescue her, or call the police, we will kill both of you.”

Then they started to take Valarie out of the house, but she murmured so loud and was shaking her head so vigorously that they finally removed the gag. Immediately she said, “Please sirs, let me put on my knee-high boots. I am allergic to most of the weeds and grass growing in the forest; they make me sick and I cough a lot. And I’m pregnant and I might abort the baby if I cough too much.”

The bandits looked at each other, and then one of them said, “Okay lady, get your damned boots on, and get them on fast.” They untied her hands and one of them went with her as she waddled into her bedroom to get the boots. She sat down on the bed and removed her shoes. Then she pulled and groaned as she tried to get her knee-high boots on—but she finally succeeded.

Then the bandit retied her hands, grabbed her arm, and walked to the door. And just as they went out the door, the bandit turned and again reminded Jim to get the money and not to contact the police; because if he did, he would lose his wife.

They had not bothered to blindfold Valarie because as soon as they got the ransom money they would leave the country in an airplane parked in the area where there were no trees, and where they had their camp.

But before they had gone very far into the forest, Valarie thought of a scheme that should help Jim find the camp and rescue her. So she purposely staggered and fell to the ground, groaning, twisting, gagging, and flattening the grass and weeds.

They picked her up and started walking again. She staggered along for about fifty yards and then purposely coughed, fell, and rolled around again. The outlaws did not pay much attention to her strange actions because they knew she was “pregnant,” and their camp was only a short distance away. They also knew that they would soon be airborne on the way to Mexico.

Valarie didn’t know how far it was to the camp so she kept up her little act until they got to the outlaws’ camp, which was about one-half mile into the forest.

The two men were not concerned about what Valarie had been doing because they were convinced that Jim would heed their warning and not try to rescue his wife.

Once they got to their camp they put her in a little one-room shack and locked the door. Valarie scanned the inside of the room carefully, but could not find any way to escape.

CHAPTER 16

In the meantime, Jim quickly drove to the bank where a large amount of money for the operation of the experiment was kept. He explained the problem to the bank Manager and the bank workers and asked them to fill a plastic bag with one million dollars of used money ranging from ten to one-hundred dollars bills. He told them that he was confident he and his assistant could capture the thieves, get the money back, and return it to the bank.

The bank Manager knew that Jim had the authority to get the money; so he closed the entrance door of the bank, locked it, and put a notice on the door. The notice said the bank was temporarily closed, but that it would be opened tomorrow at the usual time.

He then put the entire staff to work filling the bag with one-million dollars of used money. Fortunately, the used money was readily available and the workers had the million dollars in the plastic bag in three hours. Jim thanked the Manager and workers, took the bag of money, and sped home.

Then he took the bag of money, walked to the west fence, and set it down. He then rushed back to his house, got out his binoculars and looked to the spot where he had left the bag. The bag was gone, and Jim figured the two gunmen who had been hiding in the trees had taken it and rushed back to their camp.

The sun was getting low, but it was going to be at least two hours before it got dark. So he got out his two rifles, put them in the Jeep, and then sped out to the field and got John.

On the way back to the house he quickly explained to John what had happened, and that they were going to go after Valarie. Then he said, "John, I don't know how far they are into the forest, but I just have a premonition that it's not very far."

They didn't even go by the house; they went directly to the spot where Jim had dropped the bag of money. They got their rifles out of the Jeep, put some extra cartridges in their pockets, and started into the forest looking for some sort of trail they could follow.

They soon found the first spot where Valarie had deliberately fallen. They continued to walk in the same direction and continued to find the spots where Valarie had faked a fall. The spots were frequent enough that the two men made rapid progress, and soon they were at the edge of the forest near the bandits' camp.

They watched the four men as they moved around in the camp site. Finally, they saw a man take a bowl to the little building, unlock the door, and hand the bowl inside. Then he closed and relocked the door. Shortly thereafter all four men went into the tent.

CHAPTER 17

Jim and John slipped up to the entrance of the tent; then they nodded their heads, signifying they were ready to go after the bandits. Then they burst into the tent with their guns cocked. As he entered the tent Jim shouted, "Get your hands up or we will blast your ugly heads off!" The bandits immediately raised their hands over their heads and hollered, "Don't shoot, don't shoot!"

Then while John held his gun pointed at the bandits, Jim tied each man's hands behind his back with the rope they had brought.

And while John stood guard over the bandits, Jim rushed over to the little building, shot the lock off, jerked the door open, and grabbed Valarie.

"Sweetheart, are you okay, did they abuse you?"

Valarie hugged Jim tightly and answered, "No, my darling, they did not mistreat me. And I am so glad to see you. I was afraid that I was going to have a 'phony' miscarriage or wind up in Mexico."

Jim kissed her tenderly and said, "Sweetheart, you were so wise to make those spots in the grass and weeds because it was by following them that we were able to find you so quickly; and I can assure you, you're definitely not going to wind up in Mexico!"

Then he went back to the tent, picked up the money bag, and said, "John, herd those four bandits in front of you, and if they try to escape, shoot them!"

"Now we'll all march back to the storage building at the house and put the bandits in it; and John, you can watch them while I call the sheriff."

Then they all started toward the house with the bandits in front, and with John close behind them with a cocked rifle.

When they reached the house, John put the bandits in the storage building and locked the door.

In the meantime, Jim took Valarie and the money bag into the house, and then he called the sheriff.

In about fifteen minutes the sheriff and his deputy arrived in their vehicle made especially for hauling prisoners.

They thanked Jim and John for capturing the bandits; and then they loaded them into their vehicle and took them to the jail in Britannica. And after they got the bandits behind bars, they took the money bag back to the bank Manager and thanked him for his cooperation in preparing the bag of money.

CHAPTER 18

That evening Jim, Valarie, and John had a celebration by going to the best restaurant in Britannica. Afterwards they drove home and talked for a while about the events surrounding the kidnapping and rescue. Finally, they were “talked out;” so John went home and Jim and Valerie went to bed.

The next morning they both got up and fixed breakfast together: bacon, scrambled eggs, and toast with butter, coffee, and blackberry jelly.

Jim looked at his beloved wife across the dining table and said, “Darling, I am so thankful to have you safe and sound at home with me. And I thank the Lord for protecting you from any harm by those bandits.”

Before they finished breakfast, the phone rang, and it was the sheriff. He told Jim there was a forty-thousand-dollar bounty on the bandits.

With a surprised tone in his voice, Jim said, “Thank you for letting us know that, Sheriff, and I would like for you to give all of it to John; he certainly helped me capture the bandits. And maybe the money will incite him to find that wife he’s been looking for; and when he finds her, it will enable him to provide her with a nice home.”

The sheriff answered, “Jim, I’ll be sure John gets every penny of that money, and I might even be able to help him find that wife he’s looking for,” he said as he laughed.

Then he said, “Give my regards to Valarie and John. Goodbye;” and he hung up the phone.

A few minutes later, Jim went over to John’s house and told him that he was going to get the bounty of forty-thousand dollars.

Jim said, “John, I wanted you to have the entire bounty, so when you find that “right” lady you will have enough money to buy her a nice home.”

CHAPTER 19

During the years of research Jim and John ran many experiments and had numerous field days. On the field days they would take the farmers out to the experimental plots and explain to them every thing about the experiment. They would tell them every step that was taken: preparing the soil for planting; planting the seed at the correct rate and the correct depth; cultivation as needed to prevent a weed problem; harvesting the crop; and marketing the product or storing it for cattle feed or next year's planting seed.

They also taught the farmers how to use and maintain the tractors and implements they would be using in raising their various crops for cattle feed.

And they told them that when they had any excess feed they could sell it and use the money for food or anything else they wanted.

Valarie conducted her experiments concerning the way to grow a garden of various kinds of vegetables, harvest them, prepare them for sale, and then how to sell them.

To maximize the value of the information from the experiments, Jim, John, and Valarie wrote a book in which the results from their experiments were described and clearly explained.

The field days and the information in the book enabled the farmers to expand their fields, and increase the yields from their field crops and vegetable crops; this in turn enabled them to greatly improve their standard of living.

Also, the book had clear and simple instructions on how to operate and maintain all of the implements they would be using in growing, cultivating, and harvesting the various crops.

The book was published, and hundreds of them were printed by the Foundation and distributed free to every farmer who asked for a copy.

AFTERWORD

After ten years of conducting experiments, Jim resigned from the Uplifting Foundation Experiment and became Director of the Agricultural Research Department at Oklahoma State University. Valarie was a devoted wife and substitute teacher at the University.

John remained working for the Uplifting Foundation, conducting new experiments, and assisting the natives in becoming even more self-sufficient.

He also “found” his wife, Paula, and she was a very sweet and lovely lady. She was an educated teacher with a major in English and Foreign Languages.

So she set up a school in the second ring around Britannica and was very successful in teaching the children good English and a good Native language.