

Graveyard Secrets  
By Toby L. Williams

One of our favorite passtimes behind these walls of incarceration is traveling the boulevard of reminising for the purpose of caressing those special moments with our memories. And to assist us in our journey, we'll invite others to cruise the pages of our photo album. We'll reflect on that special young lady that captivated our interest in her with the fragrance of her beauty, with the allure of her delectable smile, with the contours of her physique and with those sweet honey-dipped words that dripped from her delicate lips. We'll even share those intoxicating moments we experienced with her that left us passed out next to her --to leave her in frustration due to our failure to share in intimate conversation with her after the moment.

We'll reflect on the kind of money we made on a legitimate job. We'll describe the kind of cars we drove, the kind of bikes we rode. And some of us have been found bragging about the crimes we committed; the dope sold, the cars stolen, the businesses robbed, the houses burglarized, and yes, even the rapes and murders committed.

And when it comes to reflecting on our living on the sandy beach island of childhood, we'll share the stories of how we played football in the mud, how we would run into the house for a cool drink of water to quench our thirst, a thirst we acquired by playing in the summer's heat. We'll share the stories of how we gathered with family and friends to have snow ball fights, how we would sneak into the livingroom in the middle of the night to see how many presents lay under the tree for us, or for the purpose of shaking the presents to guess at its con-

tents. We'll share how we used to write the little love notes to the little girls who piqued our interest; yea, you remember: I love you, do you love me, yes or no? And to make sure she don't get confused we may add: circle one. We'll share the stories of our poverty, how mom would send us next door for a cup of flour or sugar or for some other type of ingredient she needed to prepare a meal or our favorite meal. We'll share how we ate mayo, ketchup or syrup sandwiches. And we'll share how family and friends gathered to celebrate this, our special day, the day mom pushed in pain to allow us passage through the door of her womb for the purpose of gracing this earth with our physical presence to be the only you there ever was, to be the only you there ever will be. It is here in childhood where the fruit of our manhood lies. And although we have those special childhood moments to caress with our memories, we'll conceal the ~~moments~~ moments we hammer with our anger. You know, those moments that caused us pain; those moments of childhood trials, traumas and tribulations. You know, the things that happened to us as children that we determined will be our life's secret. "Don't tell anybody." "Shhh, hush, little boy!, and don't you tell nobody!" It is at that moment that those who harmed us operated as the gravedigger to shovel the dirt of the circumstance upon us. But what's improperly buried will eventually become a stench, and that stench will eventually reveal that we have graveyard secrets.

Perhaps upon your mattress of slumber you've found your prison-made pillow burning with hot tears and muffled cries as you often visualized the time or times you were visited by the gravedigger who contributed to your burial. Burying the truth of who you are under the soggy, dirty secrets of your circumstance.

The place you journeyed where the horrorfying sound of wretched

screams are heard with each mystifying step as you are accompanied by guilt, shame, and confusion. There, in the graveyard of your demented life are others like you. You are aware of their presence, yet you can not see them. They are aware of your presence, yet they can not see you. The smell of your secret protrudes the nostril of others in spite of an expensive fragrance used to conceal the stench. Words escape your lips, yet no one can hear you. Words escape their lips yet you can not hear them. The touch of the experience is evident, yet the emotions now refuse to feel, yet lying under the soggy dirt secrets of this grave lies the greatest treasures. Such treasures remains to be desired when failing to take possession of them. The more comfortable you are with who you've become out of the circumstances, the more you will fail to pursue being who you truly are.

You have a whole lot more to offer than what you've given, but, because of your dwelling place, you're unable to give what you fail to take possession of. You are a whole lot better than you've allowed yourself to be, but because you are unaware of who you are lying under the soggy dirty secrets of the past, you're unable to function as the man God created you to be. You can accomplish a whole lot more than you've desired to achieve, but you're left with the little you've settled for. You can go a lot further than you've desired to go, but you're stuck in the mud of circumstances that prevent you from moving forward.

You've heard that old cliché that says: "don't cheat yourself, treat yourself." We must treat ourselves to embracing the man God created us to be instead of pursuing to be the man we've witnessed others portraying to be, whom do not have a clue as to what manhood is about.

In order to embrace all the riches lying within us, we must enter into the arena of life with bull-dog tenacity, standing determined that

we're going to identify what's hindering our progress. Then we're going to abandon those issues in order that we may embrace the riches of who we truly are.

We must first make a proper identification.

The media as well as investigators use the five (5) W's and one (1) H approach to conducting interviews and doing investigations. The five (5) W's are Who, What, When, Where and Why. The H being How. This is necessary for us because we're required to initiate an investigation in order to make a proper identification using this approach. Now, you may use a different order than I'm using or you may find a different approach. The important thing is that no matter what approach you use, identify what contributes to hindering your progress.

In 1984, I was arrested for aggravated armed robbery, burglary and one court of kidnapping in Louisiana. The charges of attempted capital murder and capital murder are in Texas. Thereafter, I was extradicted. Texas sought the death penalty in my case. Under the charge of capital murder, one is considered insane until proven sane. Therefore, my plan was to serve the authorities with the meal of insanity. I was sent to Rusk Mental State Hospital for my evaluation and it wasn't until then that I considered making the proper identification as to what was effecting me that contributed to my numerous incarcerations which started when I was about 12 or 13teen. Why do I always find myself behind the wire of incarceration? I had been arrested so many times as a juvenile that I lost count. Then at fifteen (15), I was arrested for attempted capital murder in Louisiana. But while in Rusk, although I considered making the proper identification, it was short lived; it's too late! I was on my way to death row, therefore, I believed that the best thing for me to do is make sure I remain what the law says I am --insane!

But as I stood before the judge in the punishment phase of my trial in September of 1985, he announced, "you're hereby sentenced to die..." Now it's definitely too late, I considered. Therefore, why ask why? But let's begin with WHY. Why am I in prison? My cognitive intervention teacher, Mrs. Carter, often states that we started coming to prison long before we got here. She makes this statement because she realizes that we were exposed to things in childhood that built the road which leads to prison. Why are you here? There is something you were exposed to that contributed to your prison sentence. Be careful though, that once you discover this you don't use it as an excuse to continue in committing those same or similar crimes that got you here; playing the blame game for your justification.

Now, let's look at the WHEN. For instance: When I was 11, my cousin and I, used to spend time playing basketball. We would get into arguments, but we would work those matters out. I may find that everything is okay there so I reflect on when I would hang out at uncle Bill's house I found some of his porno. When he recognized it, he didn't get mad about it, instead he showed me movies in order that I may learn how to have sex. Now your when identified the WHO. There are people you've encountered that contributed to your hurt, your pain and shame which you continue to hole on to. And some of you still feel that twinge of guilt because you've made up in your mind that you're somehow responsible for your own hurt. Once you've discovered the who, you discover the WHAT. We may see what uncle Bill did as an accomplishment, but he actually contributed to hindering our progress. I heard the story of a young man who said that when he was 13teen, his mother's friend introduced him to sex. He had never seen anything wrong with it. Matter fact, he had seen that as a moment of pleasure, yet failed to recognize the pain

of the matter that affected him in the presence. He was unable to establish a meaningful relationship with any women afterward because this woman contributed to his decision to forfeit his childhood; to see women as objects instead of a tender rose. He had chalked that up as a major accomplishment but failed to recognize it as a major disaster. Now older, he identified what was having a grave affect on his life. You see, when adults begin to put their hands on us as children without bestowing a blessing upon us they adversely affect how we live as adults; they affect how we think as adults.

Now, let's look at WHERE. Where are you in your life at present? The where we are does not merely consist of where we are physically, but where are we mentally as a result of what happened to us. We understand that we cannot change the past but we can change our thinking concerning the past in order that it won't continue to adversely affect us in the present which will give us a broader perspective when it comes to our future.

Now, HOW? How are you going to prevent these things from continuing to affect your life?

Abandon: After we make the proper identification, it is important that we abandon the effects of what we've discovered. And it is also necessary for us to abandon those so-called friends who don't contribute to our progress, those so-called friends who serve as a reminder of the pain we've endured.

In order to abandon the effects of what happened, we must first FACE what happened.

In my Bridges to Life class, I was provided the opportunity to watch a powerful film along these lines. Two men were arrested and sentenced for the murder and rape of a young married mother. The mother

and daughter of the deceased woman contacted a mediation service and made contact with one of the men. The other man had been declared insane. There in the chapel of the Allred unit they faced the man responsible for the murder of their loved one. It is imperative that you face the matter by exposing what you were exposed to. Provided that you are unable to face the person, it's necessary that you find someone you are close to that contributes to your progress; to your growth, that individual you know will allow you to cry on their shoulder; who will continue to respect you and support you afterward. This can be difficult, but it is necessary to do. You face what happened for the purpose of forgiving who has done what to you. The one answer these women desired was, "what were her last words?" The man responded that her last words were, "I forgive you!" The tears of her last words streamed down each of their faces. And these women found in their heart forgiveness for the man responsible for raping and murdering their loved one. And as they were about to depart, the mother told the young man as she held the hand that murdered her daughter that she forgave him too and didn't mind him making parole.

Than hands responsible for their loved one's death rested on their shoulders as they took a picture together, and an embrace ended their visit. Forgiveness can be difficult but look at it from this perspective. Have you desired the judge and or jury to show mercy to you in spite of the harm you caused? or have you desired the parole board to show you mercy when you came up for parole? One young man I've been blessed to befriend stated that, "...to forgive we must first recognize our own weaknesses..." we too have our own faults, frailties, and failures and desire for others to forgive us, therefore, why should it be so difficult for us to forgive, because, we benefit from forgiving those

who harmed us, but understand this too, whether you care to admit it or not, we are capable of doing the very thing that was done to us. Have you ever said you would never do a certain thing, but wound up not only doing it, but finding an enjoyment in doing the very thing you said you will not do?

Not only do we forgive, but ~~&~~ FORGET! Forget in the sense we do not allow what happened to continue to adversely affect our lives. Of course we remember what happened, that's my testimony. We take the hurt we've endured to use to benefit others. Once we've made this accomplishment, it is important for us to maintain our FOCUS on facing what happened, maintain our focus on forgiving what was done to us, and maintain our focus on forgetting; forgetting in the sense that I don't allow what happened to continue to control my present day life.

There was this number one contender preparing for his upcoming title bout. He recognized that his team wasn't as joyous as the normally are before a bout. "Don't worry," the contender stated, "I'll take him. It's going to be all right y'all." The trainer intervened, "Champ, the fight is over with, he knocked you out." He lost his focus. He had him on the ropes, but he was so caught up in his offense that he forgot about his defense. The opponent was able to slip in a right cross that caused the champ to forget he was ever in the fight.

Have you ever played the game of chess where you had the advantage; a couple of moves from having your opponent in checkmate yet you wound up losing the game? What happened is you lost your focus. You were so focused on offense that you forgot to focus on your defense. Normally when losing a major piece, we give up, we throw in the towel. Now understand this, the person we're playing has lost their focus somewhere along the way that allowed us to have the advantage, but in spite of



what was working against them, they stayed in the fight of the game. It's important that we maintain a fighter's attitude and stay in the FIGHT!

What we have accomplished through this process is we've removed the dirt of our circumstances in order that we may embrace the treasures within us where lies the silver lined dreams, laced with capabilities to achieve, acquiring the golden candlestick, a candle capable of burning with the fire of fulfillment. Here is where the enjoyment for life exists, where true manhood lies desiring to bring forth the glowing diamond determination to maintain honesty in all dealings. Where the ruby red riches of respect for all reigns. Where the glitter green emeralds of love sparkles with glee. Where the exquisite string of pearls of responsibility hang in splendor. But we must exert caution here because we can get so caught up in the beauty of the embrace of those treasures that we allow the embrace to prevent us from moving forward. Yes, we embrace the excitement for making the true discovery of ourselves, but let's take possession. Taking possession establishes ownership. Take possession of the respect for ourselves, for out of respect for ourselves derives a healthy respect for others. Take possession of the love for ourselves, for out of love for ourselves derives love for others.

Now, how do we take possession; establish ownership? First of all, let's look at it from this perspective. Upon purchasing a car with our hard-earned money, we only receive the certificate of title which exemplifies the fact that someone else is in possession of the title. We were actually deceived into believing we were given ownership when accepting the certificate of title. Acquiring the title, which is a legal/lawful process, establishes ownership. We have a legal/lawful right to establish ownership of the treasures within us. It was by and through the

cunning of the enemy that we forfeited what God had bestowed upon us, and it is through a legal/lawful process that we establish ownership. We do this by first recognizing that God has bestowed these treasures upon us. And it is in the obedience of what He desires for us that we establish ownership of the treasures He has bestowed upon us.

Understand this, everyone is not going to be appreciative of you although you are in possession of your treasures, but if they in any way understood what you were in possession of they would appreciate you more or at least treat you differently. For instance: here's ole Joe wearing torn, worn out clothes. We walk past him as though he does not exist. But how would we treat him if we discovered that he's a millionaire. He could be the very man who holds the key to the company that we desire to work for.

Now, you are going to be visited by those with the gun of negativity, therefore, it's important that you PROTECT your possessions. And once you've secured your possession you may PROVIDE others with what you possess. By imparting those valuable treasures in others lives, you not only receive more in return, you also receive better than with what you provided others.

In conclusion:

What I've shared with you, I shared out of my experience.

Many of us can attest to the fact that we've heard the sad, sad songs of turmoil playing in the caverns of our soul. And there on the dance floor of our demeaned lives we flirted with the skirts of suicide as we stumbled in our drunken state of being. Drunken with shame, guilt, and confusion.

In the journey of my life I felt like one who's slapped around

by a circumstantial pimp and kicked into the street of life to whore out of the circumstances.

When I was seven years old I discovered that the woman I was calling mama was not my biological mother. "But why?" the question surfaced within, "would my mother not want me?" She denied me! She denied me the opportunity to take to her my little boy cuts and bruises to nurse; the opportunity to take to her silly kid questions and hard math problems and questions about girls. She denied me the opportunity to take to her my report card to reveal to her my progress in school; the opportunity to hear the stories of her experiences being pregnant with me. She left me to wonder was she overcome with joy the night she pushed in pain to allow me passage or did she find herself sadden by the occasion? I discovered that I was only six weeks old when she walked out of my life.

As for my father, well, he walked out too! He denied me the opportunity to blurt out da da to him as he played with me and taught me how to walk. He denied me the opportunity to play catch football with him, the opportunity to question him on how to handle myself with the little girls, to learn from him how to ride my bike, questions about life. He denied me the opportunity to learn from him how to defend myself. He wound up going to prison. After his release he married a woman with ten children, three sons at home. Upon living with him I had to constantly fight my stepbrothers. I had to suffer the consequences of desiring my father's attention, his defining and affirming me. It all became unbearable. In the streets I ran out into the dark, dreary, and cold night with shame and fear as my constant companion where I embraced a new daddy. "Daddy street corner." He's the dady that embraces the bruised, battered, and beaten; the rejected, abused and destitute. He

is the daddy who has played doctor to many minor daughters and dopefiend women who pushed out their children to him behind dumpsters. He embraces little boys and little girls who are on the run from the clutches of Mr. Lust. He has witnessed men and women and children stagger to their death; many of his sons and daughters sell their bodies for money, a meal, or just a hit of dope. He has witnessed rapes, robberies, and riots. He has witnessed the death of dopefiends overdosing in the stench of alleys. He has experienced oozing blood soaking into him from bodies plundered to their death in suicide; in gunshot, and knife wounds. He has witnessed fist fights turned fatal.

No one he has ever adopted went homeless, even if the home was just a cardboard box. No one has ever gone broke, for he will make a way to lure a robbery victim into a dangerzone. No one has ever been unemployed, for there is always the job of theft and robbery. No one has ever been without a mate, for there is always a prostitute, homosexual, or unsatisfied housewife seeking companionship. No one has been without food to eat, for he serves breakfast from a trashcan and lunch and dinner from a dumpster to the fill.

He cuddles, cradles, and cares for the desolate, deranged and doomed. He breeds prostitutes, homosexuals, rapists, dopefiends, gamblers, murderers, child molesters, pimps, players and pushers.

Yet, Daddy Street Corner has raped, robbed, killed, and even destroyed. He has raped many of their dignity, robbed many of their time, killed many dreams and destroyed many lives. And I, at the tender age of nine was a new face in the family.

But in him I found a place of refuge. I experienced a sense of freedom. In him I could hide and in hiding I could be who I wanted to be. But, there's a place in hiding where the one hiding can find them-

selves hidden from even themselves. And I had found myself hidden from even me only to find myself later in life make the popular statement that says, "I'm trying to find myself." It is in this search that I discovered horrific occurrence of the past lingering in my life.

When I was assigned to the Alfred Hughes Unit, a major of the Dallas salvation army stood before the church congregation to testify about what he had witnessed when he was visited by a woman and her five year old son. She had reported that the little boy was being abused by his step-father. The major recognized that the little boy was being physically abused when he removed the little boy's shirt. I fought to prevent the tears in the well of my eyes from streaming down my face as I visualized the torment the little boy would experience in his life as a result of the abuse, but my teary fight was lost when the major mentioned investigating further. He removed the boy's pants as he stood him atop his desk and made the most horrifying discoveries. The little boy's rectum was ruptured from sexual abuse. He was also being molested by his step-father. Although I had never seen the boy, I held his condition in my heart. In my mind I screamed out to this child, "I'm with you!" In my mind I reached out to him to take him into my arms to let him know that I would protect him. Yet, the little boy's experience reminded me of a similar little boy who resided in a dark, dank dungeon. He had found himself taking his search on tour for the one who would be the father figure in his life. But the one he trusted, turned on him. The one that turned on him, tricked him. The one that tricked him trapped the little boy in the clutches of his lust. That little boy was me. I was ten years old. As the weight of this man laid x atop me in a Dallas drainage ditch in broad open daylight, I was gripped with paralyzing fear and struck by the blows of confusion. I thought he was the one I could look up to, the one I could count on, who would look out

for me. Instead I found him looking down on me in his lust. I wanted to scream for help but who would hear? Who would reach out and help a child in so much trouble? Who would take the time? The paralyzing fear and blows of confusion relayed the message to my mind that my victimizer would and could hurt me x even more if I struggled. Then there was the fear of what anyone would think to see me in this predicament. I was afraid that if someone came to my rescue they would ridicule me. I had been ridiculed enough by my stepbrothers and others. So I laid there hoping that it would soon end. Finally, he stood looking down on me as he told me, "don't you tell nobody!"

Physical and psychological pain attacked me in their demonic form as I walked down the street with my rapist semen in my underwear. The demons tore at my heart with gnashing teeth and clawlike fingernails in a feeding frenzy that would put sharks to shame. I felt like I was bleeding to death. I ignored neighborhood friends trying to talk to me. I feared that they would discover what I had just endured by their questions and inquisitive glances. The short walk home was long and painful in itself and upon my arrival, I discarded the underwear in a field and locked that ten year old little boy in the dungeon of my soul and buried him in the deafening sound of silence later to feed him with drugs, alcohol, illicit and perverted sex as the matter has on many occasions replayed in my head, visualizing the scene and the degeneration of the xman's satisfied lust quickly turning into hate. What I thought would soon end has lasted me a life time.

Circumstances we endure, I've come to realize, are not a defining principle of who we are, yet such circumstances have a tendency to shape what we have become, whereas, we find ourselves functioning out of the mentality derived out of the circumstance. Even when someone brings

to us something of value, we perceive it to be trash because we process it through the trashy circumstances we've endured.

A As I sat there under a sentence of death surrounded by men with the same and simular experiences it was difficult to understand the magnitude of the crime I committed due to my perspective on life. I had seen life as a slap in the face. I cared nothing for life as I often contemplated suicide.

I understand that we can take these horrific issues we endure and use them as justification to feel good about the wrong we commit, but I've learned to stand on my own two feet and take responsibility \* for my own actions. The process of my transformation didn't truly begin until a short time after I heard the salvation army major speak about the little boy in June of 1997. It was in this month that I accepted Christ. I had been released from death row in 1992.

Freedom, I began to learn, is an internal achievement as opposed to an external suggestion, whereas, we associate being in freedom's light with being totally free. We can live in freedom's light yet still be incarcerated. Living under what others prescribe for us is a form of incarceration. Addictions, still another form of incarceration. Living life without accepting Christ is the worst form of incarceration and it would be ironically counterproductive to spend one's life incarcerated, then die and as a result have to spend eternity incarcerated also.

It is in the freedom of Christ that I no longer reside in the graveyard of life. It is in this freedom that I'm in possession of those treasures God has bestowed upon me even before the beginning of time.