

Something to Think About Book 2

Chapter 1

Do You Love America This Much?

The Prologue from Matthew D. Hutcheson's 2021 book, *True American, A True Story About a Vietnamese Immigrant's Love for America*

...

1977

The South China Sea, Two Hundred Miles South of Mỹ Tho, Vietnam

The violent sea began to swallow the small fishing boat.

Risking his own life, the captain agreed to transport 50 Vietnamese escapees, two thirds of whom were babies and young children, from a Chairman Hồ Chí Minh communist re-education compound, to the small island, "Pulau Bidong," hundreds of miles south of Viet Nam. Groaning under its full load, the boat was in severe peril, being uncontrollable in the storm.

Packed like sardines in the fish-hold of the boat, men, women, and children cried in sheer terror as the boat was tossed like a toy on the Niagara.

A "false layer" was placed on top of the fish-hold, into which fish were actually placed, making it appear to authorities that the fish-hold was full to the top.

Fish slime oozed down the boat's inside hull into the lower fish-hold in which soon to be eight-year-old Ngô Văn Thông (Thông pronounced Tao'um) and his family sat packed together like sardines. To Thông's left was his nine-year-old cousin, Mylinh (pronounced May-Lynn). Thông and Mylinh were like brother and sister, having grown up together.

The air itself choked on its own putrid smell, a witch's brew of fish slime, weeks-long unwashed bodies, seawater, and the spilled toilet bucket. The vengeant sea crashed in on the boat, filling the fish-hold with water. The cooking pans and toilet bucket sloshed to-and-fro with each crashing wave. Thông's family sat waist deep in the witch's brew which was increasing by the minute. Everyone in the over-occupied boat was threatened with death by drowning. All of them were sea-sick, dehydrated, and starving.

Back and forth.

Back and forth.

Wave after wave.

Shrieks of terror. Wailing babies.

Thông glanced at Mylinh.

He asked her, "Bạn ổn chứ?" which in Vietnamese means, "Are you ok?"

Of course, he knew she was not. Like everyone else, she was on the verge of death. Dehydration, starvation, fever, sea sickness.

Thông let go of his mother and embraced his cousin. He whispered into her ear, "It is going to be okay. I have you. I am here."

Exerting all her strength, Mylinh whispered back to Thông:

"America."

"America."

"America."

It was the last word she ever spoke.

Her hope in America depleted her last reserves of strength and her body went limp. All fear fled from her face. Her eyes vacant.

"Mylinh?"

"Mylinh!"

"Oh, no! Please no! Please don't die! I can't do this without you!" wailed Thông.

There was nothing anyone could do. She was gone.

There was no time to waste. The weight of the boat had to be lightened.

The false layer of fish overhead was pushed to one side, exposing a small hatch to the fish-hold. Mylinh's body was passed from man-to-man, up the ladder, through the hatch, and onto the upper deck and into the violent storm. Thông followed, holding on to dear life to whatever he could grasp.

The men tossed Mylinh's body overboard and Thông heard the splash, which was quickly drowned out by the vicious winds and the sound of pelting rain.

She was gone.

A part of him left with her.

He would not let her down.

"America!"

"America!"

"America!"



Courtesy <https://www.sbs.com.au>

Chapter

Excerpt from Matthew D. Hutcheson's 2020 book, *Hero, Man in the Arena, the Untold Story of Rod Blagojevich*

Martha Roosevelt awakened with a start from an anxious sleep at the gasping whimper of her frail son, Theodore, Jr.

"Thee!" Martha screamed. "Ready the horses! Teddy isn't breathing!" ("Thee" was what Martha called Teddy's father, Theodore, Sr.)

Thee quickly dressed in warm clothes and ran out to the stable where he hitched the team to the carriage.

"Martha!" Thee yelled. "I'm out front with the horses! Bring the boy!"

Martha ran outside to the carriage carrying the bundled Teddy. She climbed aboard the open carriage and placed Teddy on her lap, facing forward. "Hyah!" exclaimed Thee as he snapped the reins.

The horses exploded into a full-out sprint. The wind at young Teddy's face would hopefully be strong enough to find its way into the lungs of their suffocating son.

Teddy suffered from severe asthma. The words of the family physician rang in her ears, "The boy will not likely live past age four."

Holding on for dear life, while also holding onto Teddy, the horses raced through the streets of 19th century New York City in the dark of night.

"Thee! He's breathing! He's breathing!" Thee slowed the horses and thanked heaven his boy would see another day.

"I don't know if it was the force of air from the speed of the horses or the excitement from the sheer terror of the ride, but whatever it was, it worked," said Martha with a slight tone of relief.

It was probably the flood of adrenaline into the boy's veins caused by what had to have been a most frightening ride.

Seventeen-year-old Rod put the book down, his heart slightly racing from the excitement of what he had just read. After a few moments, he continued reading.

Teddy survived age four and grew stronger with age. As a teenager, he qualified for admission to Harvard College. Wanting to maintain the progress he had made with his asthma and his breathing, he sought any activity which would start his adrenaline pumping.

"Boxing sounds like the ticket," said young Teddy. So, he joined Harvard's intramural lightweight boxing team in which he became quite skilled.

Teddy also loved wrestling and martial arts. He was perhaps, as some have observed, one of America's first mixed martial artists.

After Teddy became President Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. at age 42 by assuming the Presidency after the assassination of William McKinley, he was the youngest president ever. Many believe John F. Kennedy was the youngest president at age 43. It is true that JFK was the youngest president to ever be elected, but Teddy was the youngest president by assuming the office at age 42.

President Roosevelt just could not take the boxing bug out of his system. One day, the president challenged Army Captain Daniel Meade to a boxing match in the White House gymnasium.

"Don't pull your punches now, Captain. Show me what you've got," said President Roosevelt.

Not one to disobey a direct order, Captain Meade smashed the president in the eye, injuring it. Teddy never did see well out of it again.

Physicians say blood vessel damage was the cause, and some suspected retina damage.

Twelve years after the fact, Captain Meade said, "I did not know that I had blinded the [president] until I read about it in the paper a few days ago." Thrilled with what he had just learned about America's 26th president, Rod uttered, "Teddy Roosevelt is my kind of guy."

**AMUNDSEN PARK DISTRICT AMUNDSEN PARK DISTRICT CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
1974**

The Amundsen Park District sponsored many afterschool activities for kids, ranging from arts and crafts, to basketball, to boxing.

Rod knew just what he wanted to do. "I would like to learn to box," said the slender Rod to the program registrar.

"You would, huh?"

"Yes, please."

"You don't look like a boxer. Those kids can be really tough. Are you sure you want to box?"

"Yes, please," replied Rod.

Within moments Rod was given a locker, equipment, and his training began.

Rod impressed his trainer, Jerry Marzillo, with his desire to fight and win. He was no weakling. He was not afraid. Rod was tough, really tough, tougher than most, and he was a real fighter inside.

"Listen, Rod," said Marzillo. "You are going to have to get some wins under your belt before you will qualify for the Golden Gloves. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir," replied Rod.

"I'm ready."

"Now, listen to me and listen good. You are going to fight three kids in your weight division: McAlmden, Bassuk, and Dimino. Each one of them wants to be in the tournament, and each is willing to smash your face to keep you out. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir."

Rod spent the next twelve months during 1974 and 1975 training and fighting. He defeated those three challengers, qualifying him for the Chicago Golden Gloves tournament. While Rod trained in the Amundsen Park District Gymnasium, his fights took place in the St. Andrews Gymnasium. It was in St. Andrews that the Golden Gloves tournament would take place.

The first day of the tournament, Rod concentrated and organized his thoughts.

"Remember Teddy. Remember Teddy. Remember Teddy," repeated Rod. "If Teddy could do it, so can I."

It was time. Rod stepped into the ring with Thomas Muhme. After three rounds, Rod beat Muhme by judge's decision.

"Great work out there, kid," said Marzillo. "Go home and get some rest. Tomorrow, you have Patrick Porter."

Rod slept well that night and returned to St. Andrews Gymnasium the following evening. After several hours it was Rod's turn to fight.

"Listen, kid. I want you to remember everything I taught you. Porter is a stronger and better fighter than Muhme. This one is going to be a tougher fight. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir."

"Good. Now, go out there and knock him out!"

Things did not go well for Rod. Patrick Porter unleashed an assault that kept Rod in a defensive position for most of the fight. The referee ended the fight, declaring a TKO in favor of Porter because Rod was unable to fight back. Porter was just too much. But the experience was good, and Rod had stepped into the arena and fought, just like Teddy did.

"The credit belongs to the man in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly . . ." (Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.)

In the end, Rod had 6 wins, two by knockout, and one defeat.

Rod was the man in the arena.



Source: Rod Blagojevich Governor Archives

Chapter #

"Grooms"

The Danish phrase, "grine og sukke," in means, "laugh and sigh." As a Anglicized portmanteau, the two words, like smoke and fog, forming "smog," are combined (gr + ukke) to form a simplified "gruk" (pronounced, "groom"). A "groom" is a poetic form developed by Danish scientist, Piet Hein (1905 - 1966). During his lifetime, Hein wrote over 7,000 of these little gems. Here are a few for your enjoyment.

[Note to Kirsten... please make gridlines invisible.]

<p>SOLVING PROBLEMS</p> <p>Problems worthy of attack prove their worth by hitting back.</p>	<p>ADMONISHED</p> <p>Put up in a place where it's easy to see the cryptic admonishment T.T.T.</p>	<p>When you feel how depressingly slowly you climb, it's well to remember that Things Take Time.</p>
<p>THE ROAD TO WISDOM</p> <p>The road to wisdom? - Well, it's plain and simple to express: Err and err and err again but less and less and less.</p>	<p>YOU GET WHAT YOU GIVE</p> <p>The way to grow grand is not: to demand. In life's every field you are what you yield.</p>	<p>There is one art, no more, no less: to do all things with art- lessness.</p>
<p>THE MIRACLE OF SPRING</p> <p>We glibly talk of nature's laws but do things have a natural cause? Black earth turned into yellow crocus in undiluted hocus-pocus.</p>	<p>TWO WORDS</p> <p>Two words express My love galore: Nevertheless, Alwaysthmore</p>	<p>A PSYCHOLOGICAL TIP</p> <p>Whenever you're called on to make up your mind, and you're hampered by not having any, the best way to solve the dilemma, you'll find, is simply by spinning a penny. No - not so that chance shall decide the affair while you're passively standing there moping; but the moment the penny is up in the air, you suddenly know what you're hoping</p>
<p>A WORD TO THE WISE</p> <p>Let the world pass in its time-ridden race; never get caught in its snare. Remember, the only acceptable case for being in any particular place is having no business there.</p>	<p>LIVING IS -</p> <p>Living is a thing you do now or never - which do you?</p>	<p>THE ETERNAL TWINS</p> <p>Taking fun as simply fun and earnestness in earnest shows how thoroughly</p>

		<p>thou none of the two discernest.</p>
<p>CONSOLATION GROOK</p> <p>Losing one glove is certainly painful, but nothing compared to the pain, of losing one, throwing away the other, and finding the first one again.</p>	<p>OMNISCIENCE</p> <p>Knowing what thou knowest not is in a sense omniscience.</p>	<p>SIMPLY ASSISTING GOD</p> <p>I am a humble artist moulding my earthly clod, adding my labour to nature's, simply assisting God.</p> <p>Not that my effort is needed; yet somehow, I understand, my maker has willed it that I too should have unmoulded clay in my hand.</p>
<p>MANKIND</p> <p>Men, said the Devil, are good to their brothers: they don't want to mend their own ways, but each other's.</p>	<p>NAIVE --</p> <p>Naive you are if you believe life favours those who aren't naive.</p>	<p>THE MIRACLE OF SPRING</p> <p>We glibly talk of nature's laws but do things have a natural cause?</p> <p>Black earth turned into yellow crocus is undiluted hocus-pocus.</p>
<p>PRAYER</p> <p>to the sun above the clouds.</p> <p>Sun that givest all things birth, shine on everything on earth!</p> <p>If that's too much to demand, shine at least on this our land.</p> <p>If even that's too much for thee, shine at any rate on me.</p>	<p>CIRCUMSCRIPTURE</p> <p>As Pastor X steps out of bed he slips a neat disguise on: that halo round his priestly head is really his horizon.</p>	<p>SOCIAL MECHANISM</p> <p>When people always try to take the very smallest piece of cake how can it also always be that that's the one that's left for me?</p>
<p>A TOAST</p> <p>The soul may be a mere pretence, the mind makes very little sense. So let us value the appeal of that which we can taste and feel.</p>	<p>ON PROBLEMS</p> <p>Our choicest plans have fallen through, our airiest castles tumbled over, because of lines</p>	<p>AN ETHICAL GROOK</p> <p>I see and I hear and I speak no evil; I carry no malice</p>

	<p>we neatly drew and later neatly stumbled over.</p>	<p>within my breast; yet quite without wishing a man to the Devil one may be permitted to hope for the best.</p>
<p>LILAC TIME</p> <p>The lilacs are flowering, sweet and sublime, with a perfume that goes to the head; and lovers meander in prose and rhyme, trying to say -- for the thousandth time -- wha's easier done than said.</p>	<p>THE DOUBLE-DOOR EFFECT</p> <p>Double doors are justified because they're comfortably wide. Therefore you only half undo'em; and therefore nothing can get through 'em.</p>	<p>FORETASTE WITH AFTERTASTE</p> <p>Corinna's scanty evening dress reveals her charms to an excess which makes a fellow lust for less.</p>
<p>GETTING DOWN TO FUNDAMENTALS</p> <p>It will steadily shrink, our earthly abode, until antiode stands upon antipode.</p> <p>Then, soles together, the planet gone, we'll know the ground that we rest upon.</p>	<p>EXPERTS</p> <p>Experts have their expert fun ex cathedra telling one just how nothing can be done.</p>	<p>ATOMYRIADES</p> <p>Nature, it seems, is the popular name for milliards and milliards and milliards of particles playing their infinite game of billiards and billiards and billiards.</p>
<p>ROAD SENSE</p> <p>God save us, now they're murdering another winding road, and another lovely countryside will take another load of pantehnicon and car and motorbike. They're busy making bigger roads, and better roads and more, so that people can discover even faster than before that everything is everywhere alike.</p>	<p>OUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT</p> <p>We must expect posterity to view with some asperity the marvels and the wonders we're passing on to it; but it should change its attitude to one of heartfelt gratitude when thinking of the blunders we didn't quite commit.</p>	<p>THE TRUE DEFENCE</p> <p>The only defence that is more than pretence is to act on the fact that there is no defence</p>
<p>THE TRUE DEFENCE</p> <p>The only defence that is more than pretence is to act on the fact</p>	<p>PAST PLUPERFECT</p> <p>The past, -- well, it's just like our Great-Aunt Laura, who cannot or will not perceive</p>	<p>MY FAITH IN DOCTORS</p> <p>My faith in doctors is immense. Just one thing spoils it;</p>

<p>that there is no defence.</p>	<p>that though she is welcome, and though we adore her, yet now it is time to leave.</p>	<p>their pretence of authorised omniscience.</p>
<p>DEFENSE WANTED</p> <p>In International Consequences the players must reckon to reap what they've sown. We have a defense against other defenses, but what's to defend us against our own?</p>	<p>OH BOTHER!</p> <p>What with one thing and another people bother.</p> <p>With a third thing and a fourth it isn't worth it.</p>	<p>TIME</p> <p>Does time exist? I gravely doubt it. But gosh, what should we do without it?</p>
<p>MAJORITY RULE</p> <p>His party was the Brotherhood of Brothers, and there were more of them than of the others.</p> <p>That is, they constituted that minority which formed the greater part of the majority.</p> <p>Within the party, he was of the faction that was supported by the greater fraction.</p> <p>And in each group, within each group, he sought the group that could command the most support.</p> <p>The final group had finally elected a triumvirate whom they all respected.</p> <p>Now, of these three, two had final word, because the two could overrule the third.</p> <p>One of these two was relatively weak, so one alone stood at the final peak.</p> <p>He was: THE GREATER NUMBER of the pair which formed the most part of the three that were elected by the most of those whose boast it was to represent the most of the most of most of most of the entire state -- or of the most of it at any rate.</p> <p>He never gave himself a moment's slumber but sought the welfare of the greater number.</p> <p>And all people, everywhere they went, knew to their cost exactly what it meant to be dictated to by the majority.</p> <p>But that meant nothing, -- they were the minority.</p>		
<p>GROOK TO STIMULATE GRATITUDE in sour rationalists.</p>	<p>MISSING LINK</p>	<p>BRIDGE OR TUNNEL? Channel project.</p>

<p>As things so very often are intelligence won't get you far.</p> <p>So be glad you've got more sense than you've got intelligence.</p>	<p>Man's a kind of Missing Link, fondly thinking he can think.</p>	<p>A tunnel would be possible, a bridge would also do, but wouldn't it be better to amalgamate the two?</p> <p>Let bridge and tunnel undulate in waves from shore to shore, keeping green the memories of those who went before.</p>
<p>LOSING FACE</p> <p>The noble art of losing face may one day save the human race and turn into eternal merit what weaker minds would call disgrace.</p>	<p>A WORD TO THE WISE</p> <p>Let the world pass in its time-ridden race; never get caught in its snare. Remember, the only acceptable case for being in any particular place is having no business there.</p>	<p>MEETING THE EYE</p> <p>You'll probably find that it suits your book to be a bit cleverer than you look. Observe that the easiest method by far is to look a bit stupider than you are.</p>
<p>IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN</p> <p>A poet should be of the old-fashioned meaningless brand: obscure, esoteric, symbolic, -- the critics demand it; so if there's a poem of mine that you do understand I'll gladly explain what it means till you don't understand it.</p>	<p>THE CASE FOR OBSCURITY On Thoughts and Words I.</p> <p>If no thought your mind does visit, make your speech not too explicit.</p>	<p>LEST FOOLS SHOULD FAIL</p> <p>True wisdom knows it must comprise some nonsense as a compromise, lest fools should fail to find it wise.</p>
<p>GROOK ON LONG-WINDED AUTHORS</p> <p>Long-winded writers I abhor, and glib, prolific chatters; give me the ones who tear and gaw their hair and pens to tatters: who find heir writing such a chore they only write what matters.</p>	<p>OUT OF TIME A holiday thought.</p> <p>My old clock used to tell the time and subdivide diurnity; but now it's lost both hands and chime and only tells eternity.</p>	<p>AN ODE TO MODESTY</p> <p>Talking of successful rackets modesty deserves a mention. Exclamation marks in brackets never fail to draw attention.</p>
<p>THE CURE FOR EXHAUSTION</p> <p>Sometimes, exhausted with toil and endeavour,</p>	<p>I'D LIKE --</p> <p>I'd like to know what this whole show</p>	<p>A MAXIM FOR VIKINGS</p> <p>Here is a fact that should help you fight</p>

<p>I wish I could sleep for ever and ever; but then this reflection my longing allays: I shall be doing it one of these days.</p>	<p>is about before it's out.</p>	<p>a bit longer: Things that don't actually kill you outright make you stronger.</p>
<p>MAKING SENSE</p> <p>Life makes senses and who could doubt it, if we have no doubt about it.</p>	<p>A MOMENT'S THOUGHT</p> <p>As eternity is reckoned there's a lifetime in a second.</p>	<p>LIVING IS --</p> <p>Living is a thing you do now or never -- which do you?</p>
<p>TAUGHT</p> <p>We are taught to live, we are taught to feel. We are taught to conform and conceal.</p> <p>We are taught so well what we ought to feel that we cannot feel what we feel.</p>	<p>THE LITTLE MERMAID'S LITTLE SISTER</p> <p>The Little Mermaid's Little Sister was also partly girl and cod though in a way which those who kissed her found odd.</p> <p>...but which, well worth to mention, though at first sight absurd, I, with my fond intention, preferred.</p>	<p>THE TYRANNY OF THINGS</p> <p>I am trying to rule over ten thousand things which I thought belonged to me. All of a sudden a doubt take wings: Do they... or could it be..?</p> <p>A hardhanded hunch in my mind's ear rings from whence such suspicions may stem: that if you posses more than just eight things then y o u are possessed by t h e m</p>
<p>MOTIVATION OF TOASTS FOR A STEADFAST CHARACTER</p> <p>Your steadfast character appeals to frequent toasts, methinks: you never eat except at meals -nor drink 'twixt drinks.</p>	<p>LOOK AND THOU SHALT FIND</p> <p>Foes</p> <p>see no worth behind it. Those that are looking for nothing - will find it.</p>	<p>WHAT ARE YOU?</p> <p>The way to grow grand is not: to demand In life's every field you are what you yield.</p>
<p>THE EGOCENTRICS</p> <p>People are self-centered to a nauseous degree.</p>	<p>THRIFT</p> <p>Nobody can be lucky all the time; don't think you've been abandoned in your prime,</p>	<p>CAPACITY</p> <p>A contribution to the psychology of disappointment</p> <p>Some people live</p>

<p>They will keep on about themselves while I'm explaining me.</p>	<p>but rather that you're saving up your ration.</p>	<p>in a dream of what'll allow them to live their dream: they solemnly hold out a half-pint bottle and ask for a pint of cream.</p>
<p>THAT WEARY FEELING</p> <p>Do you know that weary feeling when your mind is strangely strangled and your head is like a ball of wool that's very, very tangled; and the tempo of your thinking must be lenient and mild, as though you were explaining to a very little child.</p>	<p>ONE'S OWN WEATHER</p> <p>You're squandering spleen on your brothers, and wasting good self-pity too, if you think that there's sun on the others whenever it's raining on you.</p>	<p>TWO PASSIVISTS</p> <p>Eradicate the optimist</p> <p>that human values will persist no matter what we do.</p> <p>Annihilate the pessimist whose ineffectual cry is that the goal's already missed however hard we try.</p>
<p>THE CENTRAL POINT</p> <p>A philosophistry</p> <p>I am the Universe's Centre. No subtle sceptics can confound me; for how can other viewpoints enter, when all the rest is all around me?</p>	<p>MOUSE AND MAN</p> <p>A relativistic grook on co-existence</p> <p>A human being sharing with a mouse. Each thinks himself the master of the house. In fact, of course, each occupier's place is the other's insulating interspaces.</p>	<p>THREE FACTS ABOUT TRAFFIC</p> <p>Three facts, quite easy, should be known to all would-be arrivers who set out on wheels:</p> <p>that roads are greasy, safety margins small, and fellow drivers fellow imbeciles.</p>
<p>VITA BREVIS</p> <p>A lifetime is more than sufficiently long for people to get what there is of it wrong.</p>	<p>ETERNITY AND THE CLOCK</p> <p>A homage to finity</p> <p>Eternity's one of those mental blocks- the concept is inconceivable. The clock concedes it in ticks and tocks, belittled, belaboured, believable.</p> <p>Each passing moment is seized and chewed with argument incontestable. Premasticated, like baby food, eternity is digestible.</p>	<p>ASTRO-GYMNASTICS</p> <p>Do-it-yourself grook</p> <p>Go on a starlit night, stand on your head, leave your feet dangling outwards into space, and let the starry firmament you tread be, for the moment, your elected base.</p> <p>Feel Earth's colossal weight of ice and granite, of molten magma, water, iron, and lead;</p>

		<p>and briefly hold this strangely solid planet balanced upon your strangely solid head.</p>
<p>TWIN MYSTERY</p> <p>To many people artists seem undisciplined and lawless. Such laziness, with such great gifts, seems little short of crime. One mystery is how they make the things they make so flawless; another, what they're doing with their energy and time.</p>	<p>DRAWING NEAR</p> <p>To Saul Steinberg</p> <p>You draw the near things nearer by making clear things queerer.</p>	<p>THOUGHTS AND THINGS</p> <p>I concentrate on the concentric rings produced by my pen in the ink. The thing that distinguishes thoughts from things is that thoughts are harder to think.</p>
<p>LAST THINGS FIRST</p> <p>Solutions to problems are easy to find: the problem's a great contribution. What's truly an art is to wring from your mind a problem to fit a solution.</p>	<p>ON BEING ONESELF</p> <p>Good resolution grook</p> <p>If virtue can't be mine alone at least my faults can be my own.</p>	<p>UNPLUMBED DEPTHS</p> <p>Grook on philo-sophistical and other -isms</p> <p>Philo-sophisticism with hypnotic effect affects the boobies that abound: being so bottomlessly idiotic that even they can see it profound.</p>
<p>ORIGINALITY</p> <p>Original thought is a straightforward process. It's easy enough when you know what to do. You simply combine in appropriate doses the blatantly false and the patently true.</p>	<p>WISDOM IS -</p> <p>Wisdom is the booby prize given when you've been unwise.</p>	<p>THE OPPOSITE VIEW</p> <p>For many system shoppers it's a good-for-nothing system that classifies as opposites stupidity and wisdom. because by logic-choppers it's accepted with avidity: stupidity's true opposite's the opposite stupidity.</p>
<p>WANTING TO BE ABLE TO</p> <p>'Impossibilities' are good not to attach that label to; since, correctly understood, if we wanted to, we would be able to be able to.</p>	<p>WHO IS LEARNED?</p> <p>A definition</p> <p>One who, consuming midnight oil in studies diligent and slow, teaches himself, with painful toil, the things that other people know.</p>	<p>EVERYBODY'S WORTH KNOWING</p> <p>It's some sort of comfort to get the gist of certain impertinents I could list - so that you know what you</p>

		haven't missed.
<p>GROOK ABOUT FAITH, HOPE, ETC.</p> <p>She gave me hope she gave me love, with bounty unalloyed. But what she had of faith, alas, she gave to Freud.</p>	<p>THE CIVILIZED ART</p> <p>Two types that had far better leave to their betters the civilized art of exchanging letters are those who disdain to make any response, and those who infallibly answer at once.</p>	<p>PRESCRIPTION</p> <p>A bit of virtue will never hurt you.</p>
<p>THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF GASTRONOMY</p> <p>There's a rule for proper doses in the dinner-eaters lore: one should stop the filling process while one still has room for more.</p> <p>And if someone at the table had reminded me before - Hallelujah! I'd be able to absorb a little more.</p>	<p>HANDSOME IS - Portrait-grook</p> <p>He's gallantry personified; in fact his brochures ought to read: SATISFACTION GUARANTEED - or your virginity returned intact.</p>	<p>IDLE FELLOW Portrait-grook</p> <p>Professor Blooby doesn't see the fun in what his fellow-man call relaxation. He isn't ignorant of how it's done, but lacks the necessary application.</p>
<p>A DIPLOMATIC COMPROMISE</p> <p>A fellow I know can get mountains to move and all opposition appeases: he preaches what God cannot help but approve, and does what the Devil he pleases.</p>	<p>NOVELTY</p> <p>For me there is something ineffably new in every new moment's arising; and even the things I habitually do have qualities new and surprising.</p> <p>There's nothing that happens that happened before in exactly that way in its life. When you're playing the piano, it's rather a bore; but it's nice when you're kissing your wife.</p>	<p>REMEDIES' REMEDIES</p> <p>Pills are useful against ills and against too many pills.</p>
<p>WE DO OUR BEST Or do we?</p> <p>Modern man has the skill; he can do what he will. But alas - being man he will do</p>	<p>CHEAP EATERY</p> <p>Whenever I'm scared by the state of my purse I dine at the 'Gold-Digger's Claim', where the food is so out of comparison worse you forget that the price is the same.</p>	<p>SIMILARITY Commutative Law</p> <p>No cow's like a horse, and no horse like a cow. That's one similarity anyhow.</p>

what he can.		
<p>THE PARADOX OF LIFE</p> <p>Philosophical grook.</p> <p>A bit beyond perception's reach</p> <p>I sometimes believe I see</p> <p>that Life is two locked boxes, each</p> <p>containing the other's key.</p>	<p>BUDGETING: THE FIRST LAW</p> <p>If you want to know</p> <p>where your money went,</p> <p>you must spend it quickly</p> <p>before it's spent.</p>	<p>BUDGETING: THE FIRST LAW</p> <p>If you want to know</p> <p>where your money went,</p> <p>you must spend it quickly</p> <p>before it's spent.</p>
<p>ON AN ASHTRAY</p> <p>When your thirst</p> <p>and hunger cease,</p> <p>may your ashes</p> <p>rest in peace.</p>	<p>CANDLE WISDOM</p> <p>If you knew</p> <p>what you will know</p> <p>when your candle</p> <p>has burnt low,</p> <p>it would greatly</p> <p>ease your plight</p> <p>while your candle</p> <p>still burns bright.</p>	<p>WHAT LOVE IS LIKE</p> <p>Love is like</p> <p>a pineapple,</p> <p>sweet and</p> <p>undefinable.</p>
<p>MEMENTO VIVERE</p> <p>Love while you've got</p> <p>love to give.</p> <p>Live while you've got</p> <p>life to live.</p>	<p>TIMING TOAST</p> <p>Grook on how to char for yourself</p> <p>There's an art of knowing when.</p> <p>Never try to guess.</p> <p>Toast until it smokes and then</p> <p>twenty seconds less.</p>	<p>THOUGHTS ON A STATION PLATFORM</p> <p>It ought to be plain</p> <p>how little you gain</p> <p>by getting excited</p> <p>and vexed.</p> <p>You'll always be late</p> <p>for the previous train,</p> <p>and always in time</p> <p>for the next</p>
<p>ABREAST</p> <p>He who aims</p> <p>to keep abreast</p> <p>is for ever</p> <p>second best.</p>	<p>THE FINAL STEP</p> <p>If they made diving boards</p> <p>six inches shorter -</p> <p>think how much sooner</p> <p>you'd be in the water.</p>	<p>WHAT PEOPLE MAY THINK</p> <p>Some people cower</p> <p>and wince and shrink,</p> <p>owing to fear of</p> <p>what people may think.</p> <p>There is one answer</p> <p>to worries like these:</p> <p>people may think</p> <p>what the devil they please.</p>
GOOD ADVICE	ON DENMARK	THOSE WHO KNOW

<p>Shun advice at any price - that's what I call good advice</p>	<p>Denmark seen from a foreign land looks but like a grain of sand. Denmark as we Danes conceive it is so big you won't believe it.</p>	<p>Those who always know what's best are a universal pest.</p>
<p>SATURATION</p> <p>The heavens are draining, it's raining and raining, and everything couldn't be wetter, and things are so bad that we ought to be glad: because now they can only get better.</p>	<p>WISDOM</p> <p>Those who have no wisdom yet count their wealth by what they get. you who have the grace to live: count your wealth by what you give!</p>	<p>ABOUT DENMARK</p> <p>Why not let us compromise about Denmark's proper size, which will truly please us all, since it's bigger than it's small.</p>
<p>NOTHING IS INDESPENSABLE</p> <p>Grook to warn the universe against megalomania</p> <p>The universe may be as great as they say. But it wouldn't be missed if it didn't exist.</p>	<p>TIME AND ETERNITY</p> <p>Where the woods and ploughlands of tradition and modernity run into the never-ending deserts of eternity, there I have my daily task while time smoothly passes, spooning the eternal sands into hour-glass.</p>	<p>INVESTMENT POLICY</p> <p>Anxieties yield at a negative rate, increasing in smallness the longer they wait.</p>
<p>A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT</p> <p>Stomach-ache can be a curse; heart-ache may be even worse; so thank Heaven on your knees if you've got but one of these.</p>	<p>THE WISDOM OF THE SPHERES</p> <p>How instructive is a star! It can teach us from afar just how small each other are.</p>	<p>IT ISN'T ENOUGH</p> <p>One paramount truth our society smothers in petty concern with position and pelf: It isn't enough to exasperate others; you've got to remember to gladden yourself.</p>
<p>SMALL THINGS AND GREAT</p> <p>He that lets the small things bind him leaves the great undone behind him.</p>	<p>BRAVE</p> <p>To be brave is to behave bravely when your heart is faint. So you can be really brave only when you really ain't.</p>	<p>THE STATE</p> <p>Nature, our father and mother, gave us all we have got. The state, our elder brother, swipes the lot.</p>
<p>PRESENCE OF MIND</p>	<p>MAKING AN EFFORT</p>	<p>CONSTITUTIONAL POINT</p>

<p>You'll conquer the present suspiciously fast if you smell of the future -- and stink of the past.</p>	<p>Our so-called limitations, believe, apply to faculties we don't apply. We don't discover what we can't achieve until we make an effort not to try.</p>	<p>Power corrupts, where as sound opposition builds up our free democratic tradition. One thing would make a democracy flower: having a strong opposition -- in power.</p>
<p>RHYME AND REASON</p> <p>There was an old woman who lived in a shoe. She had so many children. She didn't know what to do. But try as she would she could never detect which was the cause and which the effect.</p>	<p>WIDE ROAD</p> <p>To make a name for learning when other roads are barred, take something very easy and make it very hard.</p>	<p>THE ONLY SOLUTION</p> <p>We shall have to evolve problem-solvers galore-- since each problem they solve creates ten problems more.</p>
<p>REFLECTION ON SIZE</p> <p>Small people often overrate the charm of being tall; which is, that you appreciate the charm of being small.</p>	<p>A REPROOF</p> <p>Grook in answer to a long explanatory letter</p> <p>In view of your manner of spending your days I hope you may learn, before ending them, that the effort you spend on defending your ways could be better spent on amending them.</p>	<p>STONE IN SHOE</p> <p>If a nasty jagged stone gets into your shoe, thank the Lord it came alone -- what if it were two?</p>
<p>THE UNATTAINABLE IDEAL</p> <p>We ought to live each day as though it were our last day here below.</p> <p>But if I did, alas, I know it would have killed me long ago.</p>	<p>A TIP</p> <p>to members of the literary profession</p> <p>Those who can write have a lot to learn from those bright enough not to.</p>	<p>THE ULTIMATE WISDOM</p> <p>Philosophers must ultimately find their true perfection in knowing all the follies of mankind -- by introspection.</p>



*Wisdom is
the booby prize
given when you've been
unwise.*

Piet Hein

Chapter #

All Roads End

Mr. Frost took the road less traveled by
And said it made all the difference
He didn't say but there is a why

"All roads end," is the reasoning
Paths are taken for treasure to obtain
Frost obtained his, and to him was very pleasing

A youthful lad chose the more traveled path
He thought the less traveled way was far too boring
And forsook his values to pursue unsolvable math

The youthful lad wrung his hands clammy
As he stared astonished as his path diverged again in two
One path led to "who knows what," the other led to family

He went towards "who knows what" and finally came to the end
Nobody waited there and he lowered his heavy head
"Surely I must be lost," he said; my relationships I must mend

The lad took the easy path, and unlike Mr. Frost
Thinking friends mean more than blood
But discovered sadness and oh at such a cost!

Where one's heart is there will their treasure be
Only one path leads to treasure
Eternity with one's family.

Written July 26, 2018

© 2018-2021 Matthew D. Hutcheson



Courtesy of ConfusedNoidles.com

Chapter #

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on August 12, 2018 to his family.

...

Dear Fam,

I can't believe it has already been a week since Annette's visit! That might have been the fastest week ever! I miss her and the kids so bad. Thank you for your continuing prayers and thoughts on our behalf. We hope, and exercise our faith, that liberty is just around the corner.

Speaking of liberty, yesterday Lee came to visit. As always, it was wonderful to spend time with him. We spoke about liberty and my brain has been in "deepthink" mode ever since. I'd like to share a few thoughts with you.

The "Liberty Bell" was not called the Liberty Bell until 1835. In fact, it was all but forgotten and actually sold for scrap metal in the early 1800's after the U.S. Capital moved from Philadelphia to Washington D.C. Also, a little interesting trivia...the famous "crack" in the bell occurred in 1844 during a celebration of George Washington's birthday, not during some dramatic event during the revolutionary war.

As I mentioned, the term "Liberty Bell" was first used in 1835 in an anti-slavery pamphlet mocking how the bell had never tolled for the hundreds of thousands of black men, women, and children who were never considered, "men." In other words, the famous words of the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal," only squares with the-then held belief that male slaves weren't men. And slaves of either gender, collectively, did not represent "mankind." So sad. But that was the prevailing majority view at the time, but not by all. John Adams condemned slavery. He said it was abhorrent and he never participated in slavery at any time. Benjamin Franklin also published a persuasive argument condemning slavery and distributed it far and wide.

The race and slave issue is not a comfortable one for most people to confront and discuss. But it is one I have had the privilege of discussing with hundreds of black men who I consider friends and I hope they feel the same towards me. Slavery's past still hurts these men. They wonder, "How could other human beings SEE us that way?" And, "How could other human beings TREAT us that way?" Injuries like that don't just fade with time; time does not heal all wounds.

The racial divide grows larger. Some day, in the very near future, someone is going to have to step forward and address it head on, and find a way to bring healing to the United States, and perhaps even the world.

I look into the eyes of these men and I see their intellect and their goodness. I see their pain. I feel it. As an inmate with very few liberties, I have experienced a small sliver of what they have experienced for hundreds of years in some shape or form. Then, with the feeling in my heart, I look deeper and deeper into their eyes and souls and I find that bright light, pulsating in the depths of their spirit...the spark of divinity all human beings have within them. Every human being wants others to see their spark within. These are special moments I wish every human being could experience for himself.

Three days ago I had an impression/nudge to try to contact one of my black friends from Terminal Island. Amazingly, he had been given the same impression/nudge to contact me, he reached out and gave me an update about how things are going for him. That was quite remarkable that we both received the same prompting.

Something interesting is happening...the proverbial stars are aligning...that, again, causes me to frequently ponder, with amazement, the future possibilities of my life and what the Almighty has foreordained me to do. My time in prison was merely training. What comes next is the real thing.

Back to the Liberty Bell. After the bell cracked in 1844, its custodian had the crack drilled out to one-half inch and placed large rivets in the space to secure it with the hope it would not crack again. Then, in April 1915, the bell was brought out of its slumber and taken on a tour of the United States to reinvigorate patriotism during the very dangerous period we call World War I. The purpose of the "bell tour" was to raise capital by selling war-bonds.

From July until late November, 2015, a train took the bell from city-to-city to help Americans remember "Liberty."

The crack in the bell is profoundly symbolic. There is a crack in the liberty of our great nation today. And it needs to be drilled-out and secured with rivets. Each of you will come to your own understanding about what you believe "the crack" to be. But it must be drilled out and secured to protect the bell and all it represents.

Only then will the shootings in Chicago stop. Only then will angry and violent demonstrations end. Only then will prisons empty. Only then will drug-fueled turf wars end. Only then will fear, uncertainty, and doubt recede and fade away. Pain and hurt can be replaced with peace and tranquility. Only then will there be liberty and justice for all. Only then will every American love America. It can happen. I hope it will. If I try to make a difference, will you stand with me?

Just a few thoughts...

Life in the Extreme,

Matt



Source: USHistoryImages.com

Chapter #

Chapter

The Thing About Lions

...

Aesop's Fables

The Slave and the Lion

A Slave ran away from his master, by whom he had been most cruelly treated, and, in order to avoid capture, betook himself into the desert. As he wandered about in search of food and shelter, he came to a cave, which he entered and found to be unoccupied. Really, however, it was a Lion's den, and almost immediately, to the horror of the wretched fugitive, the Lion himself appeared. The man gave himself up for lost: but, to his utter astonishment, the Lion, instead of springing upon him and devouring him, came and fawned upon him, at the same time whining and lifting up his paw. Observing it to be much swollen and inflamed, he examined it and found a large thorn embedded in the ball of the foot. He accordingly removed it and dressed the wound as well as he could: and in course of time it healed up completely. The Lion's gratitude was unbounded; he looked upon the man as his friend, and they shared the cave for some time together. A day came, however, when the Slave began to long for the society of his fellow-men, and he bade farewell to the Lion and returned to the town. Here he was presently recognized and carried off in chains to his former master, who resolved to make an example of him, and ordered that he should be thrown to the beasts at the next public spectacle in the theatre. On the fatal day the beasts were loosed into the arena, and among the rest a Lion of huge bulk and ferocious aspect; and then the wretched Slave was cast in among them. What was the amazement of the spectators, when the Lion after one glance bounded up to him and lay down at his feet with every expression of affection and delight! It was his old friend of the cave! The audience clamoured that the Slave's life should be spared: and the governor of the town, marvelling at such gratitude and fidelity in a beast, decreed that both should receive their liberty.

...

Aesop's Fables

The Lion and the Mouse

A Lion lay asleep in the forest, his great head resting on his paws. A timid little Mouse came upon him unexpectedly, and in her fright and haste to get away, ran across the Lion's nose. Roused from his nap, the Lion laid his huge paw angrily on the tiny creature to kill her.

"Spare me!" begged the poor Mouse. "Please let me go and some day I will surely repay you."

The Lion was much amused to think that a Mouse could ever help him. But he was generous and finally let the Mouse go.

Some days later, while stalking his prey in the forest, the Lion was caught in the toils of a hunter's net. Unable to free himself, he filled the forest with his angry roaring. The Mouse knew the voice and quickly found the Lion struggling in the net. Running to one of the great ropes that bound him, she gnawed it until it parted, and soon the Lion was free.

"You laughed when I said I would repay you," said the Mouse. "Now you see that even a Mouse can help a Lion."

A kindness is never wasted.

...

"Rise and rise again until lambs become lions."

– Robin Hood the Movie, 2010

...

"Everyone wants to be a lion, until it's time to do what lions do."

– Sachin Mittal

...

"'He'll be coming and going' he had said. 'One day you'll see him and another you won't. He doesn't like being tied down--and of course he has other countries to attend to. It's quite all right. He'll often drop in. Only you mustn't press him. He's wild, you know. Not like a tame lion.'"

– C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Chronicles of Narnia, #1)

...

"The truth is like a lion. You don't have to defend it. It will defend itself."

– St. Augustine

...

"A lion is called a 'king of beasts' obviously for a reason."

– Jack Hanna

...

"I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion."

– Alexander The Great

...

"If you want to be a lion, you must train with lions."

– Carlson Gracie

...

"With each new day in Africa, a gazelle wakes up knowing he must outrun the fastest lion or perish. At the same time, a lion stirs and stretches, knowing he must outrun the fastest gazelle or starve. It's no different for the human race. Whether you consider yourself a gazelle or a lion, you have to run faster than others to survive."

– Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and ruler of the Emirate of Dubai

...

"If you are a scion of a lion, your time is now."

– Matthew D. Hutcheson



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on November 29, 2018, to his family.

Dear Fam,

This has been a magnificent week. So much good has occurred, but before it could, the possibility of tragedy had to knock on the doors of several of the men I serve.

I'd like to share what happened in one instance on Tuesday.

A man in his early 40's paced back and forth in the hallway. His hands were on his head and he was half mumbling, half sobbing.

"What am I am going to do?"

"What am I going to do?" he cried.

Although I did not know him well, I stopped and looked at him.

"Hey." Our eyes made contact. "Do you need to talk?" I continued.

"Yes," as tears rolled down his cheeks.

We went into my cell and sat down.

Then came the deluge of fear, uncertainty, doubt, worry and concern, and every other emotion you can imagine.

"I'm going to end my life today," he said.

"Well, I'm sorry to hear that. We haven't even gotten to know each other yet. That's a disappointment."

"You don't care about me. Don't pretend you do," he said.

I sat knee-to-knee with him and I looked him right in the eyes. "Do you have anyone who loves and cares about you?"

"Yes, my daughter. And my parents. I just can't endure this pain anymore. My psychologist caused more harm than good. I don't think the psychiatrist prescribed the right medication. I'm spiraling out of control."

"Take a big breath. Don't look away. Look at my eyes. Breathe."

He started to deeply inhale. His diaphragm quivered as sobs threatened to overtake him again.

"Easy now," I said. "It's going to be ok. I've got you."

"Yeah, but who's got you?"

"Are you a man of faith? Do you believe in God?"

"Yes, but He doesn't believe in me."

"Do you think this conversation is happening by chance?"

"Probably."

"Do you know that while I was at FCI Terminal Island, California, I received advanced training from psychology staff in suicide prevention?"

Startled, he looked right at me as though some power in the Universe had suddenly intervened. His breathing slowed. His quivering diaphragm relaxed.

"What can you do to help me that all of those doctors haven't already tried?"

"A license to practice medicine have I none, but faith I have, and I give you my faith freely. Physicians come to you in the name of medicine, but I come to you in the Name of the Lord of Hosts, and I can help you slay your Goliath if you let me. The Savior has me, and I have you."

At that time, we bowed our heads in prayer to ask the windows of Heaven be opened in his behalf. Then, I helped him write an important letter he needed to write but didn't know how. Then, I helped him with one other thing. Two little "clicks" towards healing. A little love. A little faith. A little attention, saved a life. He has been smiling ever since.

Life in the Extreme,

Matt

As I have pondered this experience. I wrote this poem for him:

He's got me
And I've got you
Precariously dangling
Over life's precipice
You've got him
And he's got her

A chain so vast It becomes a blur

So whatever you do

Never ever let go

Soon the pain will pass

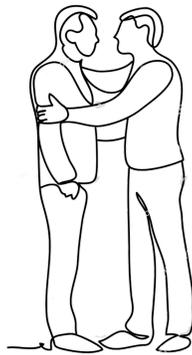
Because He's got me

And I've got you

All will be well at last

Written November 29, 2018

© 2018-2021 Matthew D. Hutcheson



Source: Shutterstock license

Chapter

Why Yogi Berra is So Funny

"Lawrence Peter Berra got the nickname Yogi during his teenage years, when he was playing American Legion Baseball. One afternoon, after attending a movie that had a short piece on India, a friend Jack Maguire noticed a resemblance between him and the 'yogi,' or person who practiced yoga, on the screen. Maguire said 'I'm going to call you "Yogi," and from that moment on, the name stuck.' *The Baseball Hall of Fame*, <https://baseballhall.org>

Upon his death at age 90, PsychologyToday.com published an article about Yogi Berra and why his misquotes are, "So Comically Endearing."¹

The article begins,

"Yogi may be without peer in mangling the English language (sometimes almost beyond recognition!). Nonetheless, I—and just about everyone else, I think—would much prefer viewing this baseball great in more positive linguistic terms: as contributing an intriguingly novel, even "enriching," flavor to American English."

The truth is, nearly every American introduced to Yogisms is delighted by them.

Why?

Dr. Leon F. Seltzer explains it this way:

"As fundamentally ridiculous, self-contradictory, confused, platitudinous, or tautological (as in, "wrong mistakes") as they might initially seem, we have no difficulty relating to them. And when we laugh at them, part of us may actually be laughing at ourselves. For his endearingly inept vocalizations aren't anything we're not altogether capable of ourselves."

In other words, we can *feel* what it feels like to make "wrong mistakes" with the English language, and it tickles us silly. We actually understand what he meant to say!

Here are some of Yogi's all time best, laugh-inducing, "mangles."

"Even Napoleon had his Watergate."

"When you come to a fork in the road, take it!"

"He hits from both sides of the plate. He's amphibious."

"Nobody did nothin' to nobody."

"I'm a lucky guy and I'm happy to be with the Yankees. And I want to thank everyone for making this night necessary."

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evolution-the-self/201509/yogi-berra-s-mis-quotes-why-they-re-so-comically-endearing>

"Slump? I ain't in no slump...I just ain't hittin'."

"I'm not going to buy my kids an encyclopedia Let them walk to school like I did."

"We have a good time together, even when we're not together."

"Little League baseball is a very good thing because it keeps the parents off the streets."

"Public speaking is one of the best things I hate."

"Take it with a grin of salt."

"He's learning me all his experience."

"We made too many wrong mistakes."

"Don't get me right, I'm just asking."

"It's like déjà vu all over again." (After Mickey Mantle and Roger Marris repeatedly hit back-to-back home runs.)

"If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there."

"We have deep depth."

"I really didn't say everything I said."

"No one goes there nowadays. It's too crowded."

"Ninety percent of the game is half mental."

"A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore."

"Pair up in threes."

"I usually take a two-hour nap from one to four."

"It ain't over till it's over."

"How can you think and hit at the same time?"

"It was impossible to get a conversation going—everybody was talking too much."

"So I'm ugly. I never saw anyone hit with his face."

"If the world were perfect, it wouldn't be"

"You can observe a lot by just watching."

"Congratulations! I knew the record would stand until it was broken."

"You wouldn't have won if we'd beaten you."

"If the people don't want to come out to the ballpark, nobody's going to stop them."

"Always go to other people's funerals; otherwise, they won't come to yours."

"You better cut the pizza in four pieces because I'm not hungry enough to eat six."

"The future ain't what it used to be."

"It gets late early out here."

"Why buy good luggage? You only use it when you travel."



Courtesy of Tricycle.org

Chapter #

This is How Most Prisoners Feel

Written by Matthew D. Hutcheson following a heart breaking conversation with another prisoner. This poem captures the essence of the conversation and the despair of that man. Perhaps it will soften your heart towards those who have lost all hope.

...

Real Pain

God forgot me, he said
Threw me in prison
And left me for dead

They say He never would
But did
I must've misunderstood

Judges in prison
Prosecutors too
Neither are just

In-laws ashamed
Have forsaken me
Because I was blamed

Children uncertain
Is my father evil?
Pull back the curtain

Wife trying to be brave
It's all in vain
There's nothing left to save

There is no trust
There is no mercy
Call me a criminal if you must

You are a hypocrite
Pretending to be

A judicial writ

You are done with me
But I with you first
Just leave me be

Never see you again
You are my enemy
Forever amen

Back to God
Who renounced me
Why think it odd?

So has everyone else
So why not Him?
I'll show you my welts

If I ceased to exist
Would you care?
Would I even be missed?

Evidently not
You haven't thought of me until now
Thanks a lot

God forgot me
Threw me in prison
Now do you see?

© 2021 Matthew D. Hutcheson



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on March 5, 2017, to his family.

Dear Fam,

It is finally starting to warm up here.

The ocean wind and constant rain has been grinding. But at least I am not in 0 degrees with 6 feet of snow like my family! So there are always reasons to be thankful!

Speaking of being thankful, I am thankful for my prison experience. It is one of those strange things in life where the horrors of it seem to overwhelm any possibility for good.

Yet, there are many reasons I am thankful for it even though I long to be home and hope to be home soon.

One simple reason I am thankful is for the interaction with many different races and cultures. I have been greatly blessed with the privilege of making friends from all walks of life and backgrounds. They, I think, are as curious about me as I am about them. In a spirit of mutual respect, we share the simplified version of our life's story, and develop a healthy respect for each other.

Each culture eventually shares their favorite "culture deprecating" joke with me. We all know one - or have at least heard one - about our ethnicity or culture. Of course, they are most hilarious to us because we get the nuances about ourselves and our cultures that may be lost upon others. That said, hearing someone's favorite self-culture joke has been quite the delight and sometimes I walk around for hours laughing.

Changing the subject, I want to share the number one vexing problem inmates struggle with in here. It is the feeling of "abandonment." Many of them have, in fact, been abandoned by parents (literally), or later abandoned by family and friends due to their drug addiction, or abandoned for other reasons. Nearly all feel abandoned by the country they love, or loved at one time.

My Mom (Carol), mailed me an LDS Living magazine about two weeks ago. I'm always in need of leisure reading material to disengage my brain from a day's worth of legal work. One of the articles was from an iconic musician in the LDS community named "Michael McLean." His music is uplifting, soothing, faith inspiring, and very easy to listen to. It's like music silk. One of his signature songs, songs (ironically) is titled, "You're Not Alone."

In the article he reveals that for a period of about 9 years he had a crisis of faith (to LDS folk this may very well have come as quite a shock). He felt he had been abandoned by Heavenly Father. At some point in the past, he felt that Heaven withdrew itself. He said, "It was like somebody decided to bolt heaven shut." He confesses that he started to wonder whether there really was a God. "What if I've gotten it all wrong? What if I got Heavenly Father wrong?", he said. He was doubting everything his music embodied.

During his crisis of faith he came across a book called "Mother Teresa: *Come Be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta*." It was published years after her death and reveals her 49-year secret....she, too, had a crisis of faith! For 49 years!!

Mother Teresa asked herself, "Why has Heavenly Father abandoned me? Why can't I hear Him or feel His spirit? And I can't tell anybody this is happening."

Michael understood her dilemma. She was, after all, Mother Teresa! And he was, after all, Michael McLean! How could he be having a crisis of faith? And likewise, how could Michael McLean be having a crisis of faith after writing "You're Not Alone," and "Hold On - The Light's Coming"? He thought to himself, "I am alone, and the light isn't coming."

Not long after reading Mother Teresa's book, Michael had a dream about her that changed his life. In his dream Mother Teresa sang about her life while he accompanied her on the piano. Here are the words to her song about why, in spite of her crisis of faith, hadn't just given up and thrown in the towel: (When Michael woke up from the dream, he wrote them down):

I choose to pray to one who doesn't hear me
I choose to wait for love that He conceals
And though God's chosen now not to be near me
I'm keeping promises my heart no longer feels

Wow!

Those words are powerful! And her commitment to promises she made even though things weren't going the way Mother Teresa felt they should be is even more powerful.

Michael woke up and asked himself, "Am I willing to keep the promises I've made to God even when I feel nothing in response to my deepest yearnings? In the most difficult trial of my faith journey, will I hold on to faith or give in to despair?"

Like Mother Teresa, Michael chose to "hold on - no matter what."

Michael ties all of this together by sharing an experience about at church talk his father gave one Easter morning during church services. Towards the end of his father's talk, his father said, "Isn't it interesting that the Greatest Intelligence in the Universe abandoned His Son at the most pivotal moment in His plan? Could it be that it was at this moment that the Greatest Intelligence of All bore witness to the universe that He had put His faith in Jesus?"

That He knew Jesus would choose Him no matter what? And could it be that when you think He has abandoned you that He is actually saying, 'I have faith you will choose Me even when I am not there?'"

And that is the moment Michael overcame his crisis of faith. He chose God even when he felt abandoned by Him.

So, if we feel abandoned, we're in good company.

Now, I've never felt abandoned by my family and closest friends. But I admit there were days when I was in Solitary Confinement when I wondered if I had been abandoned by God. But those thoughts were fleeting, and here's why: I have felt the power of Divine Providence in my life over and over again. After all, I am one of His children. I know how I feel about my children, therefore I can understand how He must feel about me. I know He is a perfectly benevolent and merciful God. And I know His interaction with me is perfect, even if I don't see it as that. And I know that His interaction with me nudges me in the right direction, and exposes me to experiences that help me, not hurt me. So I have complete confidence in Him even if I don't understand His ways.

And I have learned to be patient, to be still, and wait.

As one who could rightfully complain about having been abandoned if I chose to play the role of a victim, I instead choose to celebrate this experience and gain all I can from it. And gain I have. I am a beneficiary of great knowledge, refining, experiences, and friendships that would never have happened but for this experience. I am the beneficiary of

enhanced and eternally augmented relationships with my loved ones. I've been given insight into the invisible, and power to accomplish the impossible. All because of this experience.

So, yes. I'm thankful.

Life in the Extreme,

Matt



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

No Longer Believe in God? Read This.

The following letter was written by Matthew D. Hutcheson from prison on May 29, 2020, to a globally respected celebrity after he publicly announced he no longer believed in God.

Matthew's letter has comforted millions of others struggling with the same fear, uncertainty, and doubt.

...

May 29, 2020

Dear [Name Omitted],

My name is Matthew D. Hutcheson. I am a federal prisoner.

Every week I write a letter from federal prison to my family and loved ones. At this very moment I am typing from a prison located in Colorado on the U.S. Bureau of Prison's ancient email system.

Yesterday I saw a story on the news about you and I have been thinking about you ever since.

I hope this letter finds its way to you somehow.

Thank you for your courage. Courage, in my opinion, is one of the greatest virtues. It took a lot of courage to express your thoughts to the world. As you might imagine, I have interacted with thousands of inmates over the past seven years who have come to similar conclusions as you.

Having spent so much time in prison, and experienced or witnessed everything you can imagine, I believe I can, with authenticity, speak to why human beings are exposed to (no, immersed in) so much pain and suffering, tribulation and adversity.

Counter intuitively, it is actually evidence of God's involvement in our daily personal lives. However, I can fully understand why it is often interpreted as abandonment or evidence of His nonexistence.

Let me explain.

In the beginning, God said, "Let there be light." That statement is not an invitation. It is a solemn decree.

There is another similar statement in Holy Writ that is almost universally misunderstood – or perhaps, rather – understood too superficially.

It is this: "Be ye therefore perfect." That statement is likewise not an invitation. It, too, is a solemn decree.

In other words, this statement is not something God is telling us to do and be. We know we cannot become perfect on our own, even if God commanded us to be. However, like "Let there be light," it is a decree before heaven and earth about what HE is going to do FOR US. HE is going to make us perfect. HE has decreed it. And, of course, only HE can.

Understanding this almost hidden truth that has been before mankind for thousands of years fills me, and many others with whom I have had this same conversation, with hope and joy. It is a gift of certainty (unless the gift is refused and rejected).

One logically asks, "What, exactly, is God going to do to make me perfect?"

Now we have arrived at the heart of the matter.

C.S. Lewis explains it perfectly in MERE CHRISTIANITY.

He starts off by explaining that when he was a child, he had tooth that hurt really bad. He knew that if he told his mother about it, she was not going to stop at giving him an aspirin. No. She was going to take him to the dentist for the "full-meal-deal." He dreaded the thought, so he concealed his pain from his mother. The dentist might make the pain worse, temporarily, but in the end, the tooth would be repaired and the pain swept away.

Then he says this:

"Now, if I may put it that way, Our Lord is like the dentists. If you give Him an inch, He will take [a mile]. Dozens of people go to [the Lord] about a particular sin which they are ashamed...Well, He will cure it all right: but He will not stop there. That may be all you asked; but if once you call Him in, He will give you the full treatment. That is why He warned people to 'count the cost' before becoming Christians. 'Make no mistake,' he says, 'if you let me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in My hands, that is what you are in for. Nothing less, or other, than that. You have free will, and if you choose, you can push Me away. But if you do not push Me away, understand that I am going to see this job through. Whatever suffering it may cost you in your earthly life, whatever inconceivable purification it may cost you after death, whatever it costs Me, I will never rest, nor let you rest, until you are literally perfect – until my Father can say, without reservation, that He is well pleased with you, as He said He was well pleased with me. This I can do and will do. But it will not be anything less." – C.S. Lewis, MERE CHRISTIANITY.

There it is. THE PERFECTION DECREE explained.

Please bear with me as I share Mr. Lewis's concluding thoughts on this matter.

"I think that many of us, when Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins that were an obvious nuisance, are inclined to feel (though we do not put it into words) that we are now good enough. He has done all we wanted him to do, and we should be obliged if He would not leave us alone. As we say, 'I never expected to be a saint, I only wanted to be a decent ordinary chap.' And we imagine when we say this that we are being humble. But this is a fatal mistake. Of course we never wanted, and never asked, to be made into the sort of creatures He is going to make us into. But the question is not what we intended ourselves to be, but what He intended us to be when He made us."

While in prison I have had this conversation with thousands of inmates. Murderers, gang bangers, drug lords and minions, abusers of children, bank robbers, business executives who succumbed to greed, and more. As you might imagine, it takes somewhat of a seismic event for them to let the truth in that THE PERFECTION DECREE applies to them, too.

It is inconceivable to them that they, as evil and vile as they see themselves, could ever be perfected.

That is, only until they understand this one truth inextricably connected to THE PERFECTION DECREE:

"If you are suffering adversity and tribulation, you are in His hands. THE PERFECTION DECREE is activated in your life."

Here is why: For Him to make one perfect, He must activate, actualize, and perfect every virtue within him or her. Virtues, ironically, do not activate themselves. Virtues must be awakened from a deep sleep. Other virtues must be coaxed out of hiding. The awakening and coaxing occurs in the hot crucible of tribulation and adversity. There is no other way. God knows that. Deep down, we know that, too. Pain and suffering is necessary to activate, actualize, and perfect every virtue.

The late psychologist, Carl Rogers, sort of explained this from a secular point of view. He said that "Self Actualization," is the activation and realization of one's total capacity.

From a spiritual standpoint, one's total capacity means the resurrection of the body and spirit into immortality coupled with the perfection of every virtue; love, patience, kindness, purity of mind and heart, forgiveness, truth, humility, chastity, etc.

For millennia, philosophers have wrestled with the questions:

"If God is perfectly loving, why does He permit so much pain and suffering with those He claims to love?"

"If God is all powerful, why does He not simply make evil go away?"

"If God is all powerful, why does He not simply forgive sins? Why did Jesus Christ have to die?"

Of course, there are more questions.

There is, however, a fundamental fallacy in each of those questions. It is this: Why would God thwart his own work by removing the very environment that activates, actualizes, and perfects every virtue? The answer is, of course, He does not thwart himself. Jesus Christ died so the gift of resurrection could come to all mankind. He also died to satisfy the demands of justice with mercy so that change can occur. Otherwise, change could never occur. Jesus broke the bands of death and sin. Now we can get onto the business of becoming perfect at HIS hands.

One inmate said to me, "If what you are saying is true, then why is there so much evil in the world?"

Those who refuse to be perfected, and push God away, usually inflict great harm on others – mentally, spiritually, physically, or all of the above. Such individuals are evil and will one day be judged. I spent several weeks in a trial. I was found guilty and convicted because of things the witnesses said about me. Judgment was passed upon me.

Likewise, one day, evil people who rejected God and His promise of perfection will stand before Him, the great Judge. Witnesses will be called to testify. After their testimony, the Almighty Sovereign Judge will say, "Let the record show..." about those evil doers.

On the other hand, to our glory, those who persisted in hope and love for God and his promises will likewise hear Him say, "This man/woman never lost faith in the midst of severe tribulation and adversity. Let the record show..."

As painful as life is, God would never deprive us from that glorious moment when He, before all creation, declares "Let the record show that (he/she) was faithful to the end, in the face of every peril, and (he/she) never denied Me." That will be an indescribable moment of glory. It is that day that I dream about and hope for. I express my sincerest gratitude to Him for THE PERFECTION DECREE.

Even Niccolo Machiavelli understood this principle:

"God is not willing to do everything, and thus take away our free will and that share of glory which belongs to us." – Niccolo Machiavelli

In conclusion, I know it seems like the entire world is a proverbial "Humpty Dumpty" that has fallen off a wall and is broken into chaotic pieces. Now and then I feel a little overwhelmed by it, too. However, I want to reassure you by sharing the following quote from a book I wrote from prison called, "Quinny," (www.facebook.com/quinnythebook) where I recite the nursery rhyme, and add a concluding declaration of my own:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
And all the Kings horses
And all the Kings men
Couldn't put Humpty
Back together again...BUT THE KING COULD!

Jesus Christ is our KING. He not only is putting Humpty (all of us) back together again, He will succeed in perfecting all those who will not push Him away. It is THE PERFECTION DECREE.

It is said that "by their fruits you shall know them," meaning that the RESULTS in the lives of followers of Jesus Christ will be superior to the results in the lives of those who don't. But for fruit to be borne, there must be opposition, resistance, tribulation, and adversity. Otherwise, the virtues needed for perfection will not be awakened or coaxed out of hiding.

When you see your virtues tested, survive and ultimately bear fruit, you will know that it is HE who does it for you.

And by HIS fruits ye shall know HIM.

He knows you, and I think you know Him, too.

Love and respect,

Matthew D. Hutcheson

14620-023

Federal Prison Camp

9595 West Quincy Ave

Littleton, CO 80123

Write me a letter!"



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on August 16, 2018, to his family.

Mom and Dad (Don and Carol) taught me from the time I was a baby to respect all people, male and female, black and white, strange and "normal," (whatever normal means) and everything in between. I've lived my life that way.

Today while I was watching the news about Aretha, some thoughts and feelings came to me that I'd like to share.

Farmer's Insurance says, "We know a thing or two because we've seen a thing or two."

From this prison experience I think it is safe to say that I, also, know some things because I've seen some things.

More importantly, I've listened to people and observed their pain and suffering for over five years. I listen carefully when people pour out their thoughts, pain, sorrow, successes, and failures to me. While no one can say they've seen or heard it all, I can say I have seen and heard enough to really understand humanity in a way that would be impossible otherwise.

Back to Aretha. Most white people do not understand, or care to understand, how difficult life is, or has been, for Black people. Please hear me out. Things really are not fair for them most of the time. They are not just complaining to complain. As a people, they truly have not been treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Some people say, "You are a free American. Stop complaining!" It is not that simple.

The pains and horrors of slavery's past have never been adequately addressed. There are strong emotions surrounding it. Some whites are so horrified of it they just want the thought to go away and they don't want to face it. Other whites are tired of hearing about it and just want to move on. Others are still angry about the Civil War because their ancestors died on one side or the other and feel that Black's don't appreciate their sacrifice for them. There is a reason racism and slavery are still front and center in the American experience - because the issue has never been confronted and resolved. Some say the Civil War ended racism and slavery. That was merely the starting point. If I am ever asked by the American people to lead and serve, I will do more to unite the races once and for all. I think I have the moral authority and understanding to actually make it happen.

If I may, let me share with you what I have learned about slavery and racism; the wedge that still prevents the United States from being a United People.

Slavery has existed for thousands of years. The Egyptians enslaved the Hebrews. The Iraqis (Babylonians) enslaved the Jews. Asians enslaved other Asians. The Spaniards enslaved Native Americans. It was an evil practice then, and it is an evil practice now - and regrettably - slavery still exists all over the world. Even in America.

Here's a little history of African slavery.

In 1510, Spanish merchants began trading in human beings from Africa, as though they were spices, grain, dried fruits, or animals. African tribal leaders would round up families from opposing tribes following political or physical battles. They sold the families to the merchants. The Spanish then shackled the slaves (dozens, many times more than one hundred at a time) to the hull of the ship, like sardines. I've been shackled on a bus for 12 hours and it is torture. Think about being shackled in the darkness of a ship, on the

ocean, for a month or more, with no bathroom breaks, no sunshine, scarce food and water, and dead bodies around you. The families were often broken up, the father being sold to one farmer, the mother to another, and the children to yet another. So, so heartbreaking. If we are to unite the American people, this visual needs to be confronted and addressed. It's not going to be easy, but it must be done.

In 1672, the Royal African Company is established in London to trade goods with Africa. One of the "goods" included slaves. By the mid-1600's, almost all European nations were involved in the slave trade in some way, including the Dutch.

In the 1700's, up to 100,000 African slaves were transported to the Americas each year.

In 1780, the slave trade reaches an all time high. By this time, few nations are still in the slave trade business; the British are the primary slave traders. It is estimated that ten thousand slaves, on average, died each year while on the ships.

In 1787, William Wilberforce began a campaign to end the slave trade. As the years passed, the gruesome inhumanity of the slave trade spread around the world. It was something that could no longer be ignored.

In 1803, Denmark officially condemns slavery and the slave trade.

In 1807-1808, United States condemns the *slave trade*, but does not condemn slavery itself, through The Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves of 1807.

Between 1825 and 1850, against Europe's abolishment of the slave trade, around 70,000 African slaves are "quietly" shipped EACH YEAR to Brazil, the Caribbean, and North America. This is where the term "black market," comes from. It was secret, illegal, underground, and done in direct defiance of existing law.

In 1833, the American Anti-Slavery Society is founded and great lengths were made to end slavery in the United States.

In 1834, Great Britain abolishes slavery.

In 1860, there are four million slaves in the United States, with a commercial value of \$1,000 per slave. That is a total commercial value of four billion dollars (\$4,000,000,000). To some, that slave value justified the Civil War.

In 1865, the United States abolishes slavery.

In 1888, Brazil abolishes slavery.

To wrap up my thoughts, I will share this. From 1510 until 1888, the lives of more than twelve million African men, women, and children were STOLEN from them. The stolen lives were then sold to traders, who then sold them to land owners primarily for agricultural work. Many (most) of the slaves endured beatings, starvation, illness, and every manner of deprivation one can imagine.

Today, the horrors of these human rights travesties remain front and center in the minds of my black friends. If these horrors would be confronted and addressed to them in a way that conveyed TRUE compassion and understanding - an environment of healing could ensue. My black friends want to be heard. They want to be validated and not

discounted or diminished. Their lives DO matter. Their history DOES matter, and we need to talk about it. They need to know we "feel them," as is so commonly expressed by them among friends.

I "feel you," my dear brothers. I feel you. If I am ever given the opportunity, I will make a difference for you. I promise.

Life in the Extreme, Matt



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

Interview With a Reporter

In July, 2019, while in prison, Matthew D. Hutcheson was interviewed multiple times over a period of several weeks by a reporter for the online magazine, "The American Reporter."⁽¹⁾ The interview resulted in the article, "What Ever Happened to Matt Hutcheson."⁽²⁾

Some have stated in passing, "I would have loved to be a fly on the wall during that interview."

You do not have to be a fly on the wall.

Here are excerpts of questions and answers from that interview, as memorialized and reassembled, by the intermediators and facilitators who requested the interview with Matthew D. Hutcheson:

...

"Mr. Hutcheson, in 2011, your life's work was intentionally derailed by political operatives."

"True."

"Those political operatives told you that if you did not stop advancing your unique health care access solution, they would have you indicted, if necessary, to stop you."

"Also true."

"Those same operatives told you that they would create and promote a false story about you if you did not yield? They also extorted money from you with the promise they would stop bearing down on you?"

"Yes."

"That actually happened?"

"It did."

"You paid the extortion? You believed the entire matter would go away?"

"Yes."

"Did you keep proof?"

"Yes. I kept the deposit receipt, took photos of it, and sent copies to my United States Senator and to a reporter."

"Your professional colleagues believed the fabricated story against you completely?"

"They did. They still do."

"Even your family believed it?"

"By my family, if you mean those outside of my nuclear family, then yes. My wife and children knew what kind of mischief those operatives were up to dating back to 2009. They lived it with me in real time."

"I see. So your immediate family always knew you were being intentionally framed and sabotaged?"

"They did."

"Does extended family now understand the truth?"

"I don't know. It really does not matter what they or anyone else believe."

"But doesn't that bother you? I mean, your entire life was destroyed and taken away from you."

"I guess I am like Marcus Aurelius. 'Choose not to be harmed, and you won't feel harmed. Don't feel harmed, and you haven't been.'"

"So you don't think you have been harmed?"

"Those people tried to harm me. But I chose not to be harmed, so as far as I am concerned, I haven't been."

"How can you say that? You are in federal prison."

"I do not need pity. My life is validated. My identity is sure."

"All right."

"Problems are always perceived, anyway."

"Some have called you a 'Great Living Stoic.'⁽³⁾ Why would they call you that?"

"You would need to ask them. I do not want to place thoughts in their minds or words in their mouths. However, I will endorse the words of Henry David Thoreau. 'To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school of thought. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically.'"

"Do you believe that your 'Save America' health care access solution rises to such a solution?"

"I do."

"And you were willing to go to prison to protect it?"

"Well, I do not think anyone willingly goes to prison. Those people intended to send me there, so I had no choice but to protect Save America."

"Yes, but you could have prevented prison if you would have just abandoned Save America when they asked you to."

"Perhaps. Perhaps not. They wanted me in prison, period. Knowing what was happening, I at least had power to prevent one of two tragedies; the first, prison and the second, the destruction of Save America. I at least succeeded in protecting Save America."

"You say your favorite philosopher is Seneca. Why?"

"His words resonate with me. There is something brilliantly simple and truthful about his thoughts. Seneca is my favorite, that is true."

"Will you share one of your favorite Seneca thoughts?"

"Sure. Seneca said, 'No one could endure adversity if, while it continued, it kept the same violence that its first blows had...no state is so bitter that a calm mind cannot find some consolation...It is possible to soften what is hard...and burdens will press less heavily upon those who bear them skillfully.'"

"What does that mean?"

"The degree of shock to the system a tragedy inflicts diminishes in increments day after day. Those who understand this natural law (diminishing shock of tragedy), will be able to skillfully endure, plan, put into context, reframe, etc. Everyday things get better until they shine bright and can be worn as a medal on your lapel."

"Interesting point of view."

"It is a constructive one."

"Why did you remain in the political vortex when you knew what was happening? That seems like acting against your own self-interest."

"Aristotle said, 'Man is by nature a political animal.' It is my destiny."

"You do not actually think you can make a difference, do you?"

"Perhaps not. But those who are willing to try, should. The great Chinese philosopher, Mencius, also one of my favorites, said, 'Let men decide firmly what they will not do; then they will be free vigorously to do what they ought to do.'"

"I don't follow."

"Most politicians have not resolved what they 'will not do.' Instead, they will do anything that is expedient to them personally. We need leaders to first decide what they will not do and stick to it. Only then can we trust them to do what they ought to do."

"Well said. Do you think that politics and spirituality are connected?"

"Inextricably."

"How so?"

"As John Oxenham said, 'To every man there openeth, a HIGH way, and a LOW, and every man decideth the way his soul [and vote] shall go.'"

"That is deep."

"No, just truth. Unfortunately, 'Truth uttered before its time is always dangerous,' says Mencius."

"Do you think politicians can solve society's problems?"

"Forgive me for quoting Mencius again, but 'Never has a man who has bent himself been able to make others straight.'"

"Okay, let's change the subject."

"Okay."

"What should the world's leaders do to help our children?"

"The most important duty is to protect them from predators. I have been in multiple prisons with thousands of such predators. The thought of what they did to children makes me cringe in horror."

"Pedophilia is a global crisis."

"It is a tragedy and crisis of unquantifiable proportions."

"What else?"

"Parents should stop telling children, 'It's all in your imagination!' Of course it is! That is where life happens for children. That is how Einstein discovered relativity. Imagination is how medicine and science progress. We should not be throwing a cold wet blanket on imagination, but encouraging it."

"You have said, 'They made beautiful music...one, a melody; the other, a harmony. Together, it was always a unified chorus.' To whom did you refer?"

"Well, I am writing a book about the life of Rod Blagojevich. He lives down the hall from me now at the Englewood federal prison camp."

"Do you like Rod?"

"I do."

"Do you consider him a friend?"

"I do. I think he has been treated terribly. Back to your question, though, that quote is from the working draft of the book I am writing about Rod. When it is finished, you will have to read it to understand the context. It is also about my own marriage, first and foremost."

"Do you believe Rod will be released from prison before serving his entire sentence?"

"I do."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Put it to you this way, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe said, 'Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth – that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves, too.'"

"What does that have to do with Rod?"

"You will see."

"All right. That's it?"

"For now."

"Okay."

"You are quoted in saying that 'Virtue is excellence of character.'"

"Correct."

"Where does that thought come from?"

"The Founding Fathers called 'Virtue,' 'Excellence.' Truth, trust, and excellence are inextricably connected. Truth is virtue. Trust is virtue; both excellent. Therefore, virtue must be excellence."

"Fascinating."

"Excellence is derived from two Latin words. 'Ex' means 'out from'; and 'Cellere' from 'rising.' Together, 'excellence' means 'rising out from something ordinary.'"

"Does 'excellence,' as you define it, actually have that meaning?"

"We only ask if something has meaning if it actually does, even though we may not understand at a deeper level. Things that do not have meaning never rise to the question."

"Do you believe in life after death?"

"Of course."

"How can you be so sure there is life after death?"

"Do you agree you are here now? Is it possible you will be 'there' in the future? Is it possible you were 'elsewhere' before here, as here was before there?"

"You totally lost me. That is too deep for this reporter."

"Take time to ponder it."

"I guess what I am asking, is how can you believe in something you can't prove?"

"What is more difficult for you to accept? That you lived in the first instance (now), or that you will live in the second instance (then)?"

"This conversation is kind of bending my mind. Let's change the subject."

"Okay."

"What is your purpose? What mark will you leave on the world?"

"That is up for the world to determine. Perhaps nothing more than a kind and loving husband and father."

"You are already way past that. Your writings subdued Wall Street nearly singlehandedly and were the catalyst and basis for a 2015 9-0 ruling in the United States Supreme Court. You have already had a profound impact on the lives of hundreds of millions."

"Okay."

"What will be added to your legacy?"

"Oh, who knows. Perhaps nothing. Perhaps something monumental."

"Do you have anything else to say?"

"Perhaps. Stoic philosopher, Epictetus, also spent time in prison. I identify with him and value his thoughts. Maybe I will end with his words."

"I can only say this to you: That he who does not know who he is; And for what purpose he exists; And what is this world; And with whom he is associated; And what things are the good and the bad; And the beautiful and the ugly; And who neither understands discourse; Nor demonstration; Nor what is true; Nor what is false; And who is not able to distinguish them; Will neither desire according to nature; Nor turn away; Nor move upward; Nor intentionally act; Nor assent; Nor dissent; Nor suspend his judgment; To say all in a few words; He will go about dumb; And blind; Thinking that he is somebody; But being nobody."

FN1 www.theamericanreporter.com

FN2 www.theamericanreporter.com/what-ever-happened-to-matt-hutcheson/

FN3 www.bellohutch.com/great-living-stoics

www.tinyurl.com/mdhbooks1



© Hutcheson Family Archives

Chapter #

"Let not the actions or words of others determine your direction. With YOUR mind and heart as YOUR source, resolutely find and chart YOUR course."

Matthew D. Hutcheson
www.facebook.com/mdhbooks
www.bellohutch.com

Chapter #

Stoic Poet

"Slave, poor as Irus, halting as I trod,

I, Epictetus, was the friend of God."

– Epictetus

"To see a man fearless in dangers.

untainted with lusts,

happy in adversity,

composed in a tumult,

and laughing at all those things

which are generally either coveted or feared,

all men must acknowledge

that this can be from nothing else

but a beam of divinity

that influences a mortal body."

– Seneca



"Epictetus"

Source: The Harvard Classics Vol. 2: Plato, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius



Death of Seneca

Peter Paul Rubens by Peter Paul Rubens

Source: TheArtHistory.com

Chapter

"Great Living Stoics"

The following is a chapter from an upcoming book by modern-day Stoic, Matthew D. Hutcheson, titled, *Friendship*. We hope you enjoy it. Hutcheson's ever increasing following consider him to be one of the world's great living Stoics. He may also be remembered by history as one of the great practical philosophers.

...

Friendship

Understanding True Friendship

© 2020 Matthew D. Hutcheson

Most people on earth have heard something of the classical Greek philosophers, Socrates (470 – 399 BC), Plato (423 – 347 BC), and Aristotle (384 – 322 BC). Greek society between 510 BC and 322 BC is known as "Classical Greece." Hence, those three are commonly referred to as "Classical Greek Philosophers."

Classical philosophers Explored Big Picture Ideas

Socrates is known for his way of teaching. Called the Socratic method, it consists of questions presented to students in a logical sequence to help them arrive at the correct conclusion. Socrates' contribution to Western society has been substantial. However, his contributions are not indispensable to modern life. So, we thank him kindly, but do not accrue more to him than is due.

Plato is considered to be the Western world's "first professor." He founded what is considered by academia to be the first university called the Academy north of Athens. Anyone who has benefitted from the structure and results of modern college can thank Plato.

Aristotle gave humanity many lasting gifts; gifts perhaps of far greater importance and direct usefulness to humanity than his two famous predecessors. Aristotle, a student at Plato's academy, gave the world a meaningful understanding of ethics, biology, aesthetics, physics, law, and literature. Most of all, he took the intuitive system of logic developed by Socrates and developed a formal structure-of-logical thinking academia could really upon and that is still used today.

Since this is a book about friendship, you may be asking what Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle have to do with anything.

Well, from their foundational philosophical work in the classical Greek period sprang ideas and concepts of even greater worth to human kind during the following period: the Hellenistic period.

Hellenistic Philosophers Explored Human Character and Interpersonal Relationships

After Aristotle's death in 322 BC, the Greeks began to refer to themselves as "Hellenic." After all, the word "Hellas" was the original word for Greece. Perhaps the Greeks used Hellas as an expression of nostalgia for its classic culture. In any event, Hellenic contributions to the world at that time took on the description of "Hellenistic." In other words, "of, or influenced by, Greece "

During the Hellenistic period, refinements in philosophies pertaining to human character and interaction were made. In other words, instead of big picture ideas brought forth by classical philosophers, Hellenistic philosophers took a deep-dive into human nature. What makes human beings behave the way they do? Why do two people become friends? Why do some people stay friends when others cannot?

Greek philosophy, as we know it today, is predominantly Hellenistic, being developed between 322 and 30 BC.

Foremost among the Hellenistic schools of philosophical thought is that of Stoicism.

Stoicism

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a Stoic as a member of a school of [Hellenistic] philosophy founded by Zeno of Citium about 300 BC, holding that the wise man should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law.

A "passion" in this context is an urge to act in a potentially harmful way, not to be confused with the expression of intimacy one might show to a spouse, for example.

Being "unmoved by joy or grief" does not mean an absence of joy or grief, but rather an absence of unsteadiness. Stoicism focuses on how a person deals with joy or grief, not suggesting that there should be none.

In short, the Stoic way embraces "self-control and fortitude as a means of overcoming destructive emotions."

Stoicism is misunderstood by many to mean "emotionless living," sort of like the Vulcans of Star Trek.

That is not a correct understanding.

While it is true the modern definition of "Stoic" is "a person who can endure pain or hardship without showing their feelings or complaining," it is not true that the ability to endure requires an absence of sentiment.

Perhaps it is because of a Stoic's ability to endure pain or hardship without showing their feelings or complaining that enables a Stoic to be such a good friend to another during his or her hardship. Afterall, friendship itself can be a significant cause of pain or hardship in one's life. Yet true friendship is one of life's greatest joys.

The flip side is that Stoics loathe and refuse to put up with gossip, drama, and petty nonsense. The Cambridge Idiom Dictionary, 2nd Ed. (2006), defines "suffering fools gladly," to mean "to become angry with people you think are stupid." Stoics have no qualms about dropping a "friendship" cold if it becomes so infected.

It takes a lot to ruin a true friendship with a Stoic, and being stupid is one such way.

These finer points of understanding when viewed in light of friendship help us understand why true friendships flourish within the Stoic school of thought and false friendships wither away quickly.

Of the eight principal philosophers of Stoicism, Seneca, in particular, has something important to share about friendship.

(Stoicism began as a Hellenistic philosophy and was eventually adopted by the Romans. "Seneca is considered one of the foremost proponents of (Roman) Stoicism, originally an Hellenistic philosophy founded in the third century BC in Athens by Zeno of Citium.)

But First, What is True Friendship Anyway?

Two Dictionaries define a friend as follows:

Friend n. (1) A person whom one knows, likes, and trusts; (3) A person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause; comrade.

Definition (1) identifies what I call a "soft friend"; those who are a friend when it is comfortable to be such, but sneak out the back door at the first sign of trouble. Perhaps it is safe to posit that "soft friendships" constitute most of one's relationships.

I am not interested in "soft friendships." In prison, such a "friend" constitutes ninety nine out of one hundred acquaintances. It is not an impossibility for an inmate to become acquainted with many thousands of other inmates, especially those with long sentences. The "99" are simply here today and gone tomorrow. Perhaps, in reality, it is like that everywhere, in or out of prison.

Notwithstanding, some of the very best friendships I have ever had were forged in prison with other inmates engaged in the same struggle as I. "I've got friends in low places."

Those "1's" are deeply loved in my life.

During my prison experience I have also formed unbreakable bonds of eternal friendship with men of high reputation and stature; I also have "friends in high places."

I cherish them all.

It is they who are more than mere people I know, like, and trust. They are allies.

Accordingly, it is definition (3) that I find particularly interesting: "A person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause; comrade."

To have an ally is to have a holy connection.

An ally-friend transcends mere affection and trust, as those two sentiments are fleeting.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines ally as, "Someone who supports you, especially when other people are against you."

Seneca says, "For what purpose, then, do I make a man my friend? In order to have someone for whom I may die, whom I may follow into exile, against whose death I may stake my own life, and pay the pledge, too."

Seneca understood what ally-friendship means.

Do you have at least one such relationship?

"If you have nothing in life but a good friend, you're rich," says champion figure skater, Michelle Kwan.

Not to put words in her mouth, but I have to believe she really means, "one good ally-friend." I think she means a Senecian friend; a friend like Seneca described.

For those still struggling to find such an ally, hopefully this book will help.



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

Epictetus

[Epictetus was] a Greek philosopher of 1st and early 2nd centuries C.E., and an exponent of Stoic ethics notable for the consistency and power of his ethical thought and for effective methods of teaching. Epictetus's chief concerns are with integrity, self-management, and personal freedom, which he advocates by demanding of his students a thorough examination of two central ideas, the capacity he terms 'volition' (prohairesis) and the correct use of impressions (chrēsis

tōn phantasiōn). Heartfelt and satirical by turns, Epictetus has had significant influence on the popular moralistic tradition, but he is more than a moralizer; his lucid re-systematization and challenging application of Stoic ethics qualify him as an important philosopher in his own right.²

...

Epictetus in Prison

The Epictetus Rap³

By Jeff Traylor

For Prisoners

Reprinted with permission

My name is Epictetus, here's what I'm puttin' down,
If you ain't got your cog skills, you're nothin' but a clown.
You know I was a prisoner, you know I was a slave,
It took all of my mind to control how I behave.
But I used my brain to live, I used my brain to get through,
I let go of entitlement, thinking I was due
Whatever I wanted, whatever anyone had,
I learned to focus elsewhere, then I didn't feel so bad.
I took my better feelings and opened up my mind,
I saw I used closed thinking, I saw that I was blind
To all my choices, all my options, all my possibility
And I made a vow right then that I knew I could be free
In my mind and in my heart
And in my thoughts is where to start.

So let me tell you what to do if you truly want to live
A life you can be proud of, a life where you can give
Instead of taking all the time, doing booze and drugs and crime.
Clear your head, clear your conscience,
Clear your record, clear your mind,
Ain't no satisfaction in immediate grati-faction.

Now I know you think your circumstance
Is the reason for your victimstance,
But you know it ain't like that
You can survive like a cat.

² <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epictetus/>

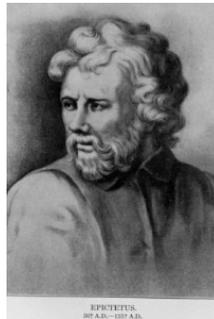
³ <http://stoicsitappextract.blogspot.com/2014/04/analyzing-epictetus-rap-by-jeff-traylor.html?m=1>

Turn it on its ear, turn it upside down,
Instead of being crushed, ask how you can turn it 'round.
Don't just do the time, don't be a stupid fool,
This here is a place where if you play it cool,
You'll be stronger in your thinking, stronger in your heart,

When you come up out of here, you'll now know where to start
To live a life of purpose, to live the life you need,
To let go of your past, your demands and your greed.

Instead of robbin' in the hood, but sayin' you are good,
Get yourself on home, forget that Robin Hood syndrome.
Don't be makin' no excuses, don't be blamin' no one else,
Take responsibility and be Master of Yourself.

© 2002 by Maximum511



Source: ReasonandMeaning.com

PHILOSOPHIAE
NATURALIS
PRINCIPIA
ANIMI MOTUS

**Hutcheson's Three Laws of
eMotion as Adapted from Sir
Issac Newton.**

1

**"A rumor spreads at a
constant rate unless acted
upon by an external force."**

2

"Influence = Reputation x Credibility"

3

**"For every word spoken by you
about another, there is an equal and
opposite number of words spoken
by others about you."**



Source: Britannica.com

Chapter

Five famous world leaders who have served time in prison

Written May 16, 2018

Reprinted with permission from the SouthAfrican.com⁴

...

Anwar Ibrahim's release from a Malaysian jail on Wednesday paves the way for him to become prime minister, a path from prison to power that has been trodden by some of the most famous leaders of the last century.

Anwar was originally jailed 20 years ago by then-premier Mahathir Mohamad, on what supporters insisted were trumped up sodomy charges.

He was imprisoned again in 2015 by Najib Razak, the man who was ousted last week in shock polls.

The now 92-year-old Mahathir, who came out of retirement to lead the revolution at the ballot box, and who now holds the top job is expected eventually to vacate the prime ministership for the younger man.

Here are five other former inmates who emerged from jail to take power:

Nelson Mandela

"No power on earth can stop an oppressed people determined to win their freedom," said Nelson Mandela in 1961, the year before he was convicted for leading the armed struggle for black rights in South Africa.

Mandela was sent to the notorious Robben Island penitentiary, where his 27 years behind bars left him the most recognisable face of opposition to apartheid and a rallying figure in the international campaign to isolate Pretoria's white minority government.

Released in 1990, Mandela was elected president four years later at the age of 75 in South Africa's first multiracial election.

Aung San Suu Kyi

⁴ <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/famous-world-leaders-who-have-served-time-in-prison/>

The daughter of revered independence leader General Aung San, Myanmar's de facto head of state opted in her youth for a quiet family life in Oxford over continuing her father's legacy.

But when she returned to Yangon to visit her dying mother in 1988, Suu Kyi was propelled into the national spotlight during a failed national uprising against military rule. She spent 15 of the following 21 years under house arrest.

Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru first went to jail in British-ruled India in 1921 after calling for the boycott of a tour by the Prince of Wales. He described his imprisonment as "the greatest pleasure" for allowing a showcase of his opposition to colonial rule.

He was to spend nearly a decade behind bars on various charges, often as a result of his involvement with the civil disobedience campaigns of political ally Mahatma Gandhi, who also spent years in prison.

Elected the country's first prime minister in 1947 – a post he held until his death near 17 years later – Nehru forged the Gandhi-Nehru family dynasty that has dominated Indian politics for most of the decades since.

Vaclav Havel

As a dissident playwright known in his youth for his hard-partying lifestyle, Havel's peripheral involvement in the failed Czechoslovakian uprising of 1968 prompted a lifetime of activism.

Havel was blacklisted from the theatre and had various stints in prison before rising to the presidency in the "Velvet Revolution" that toppled the country's sclerotic communist regime.

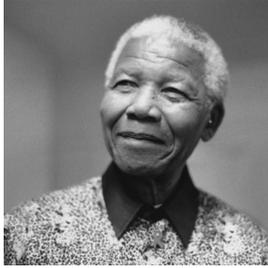
With a love of western music, one of Havel's first acts in office was to invite Frank Zappa and the Rolling Stones to perform in Prague. Both acts had been banned under the regime his government replaced.

Michelle Bachelet

Chile's first female president was introduced to politics by her father, a former government official who died after being tortured in detention following a 1973 military coup.

Bachelet herself was later arrested and subjected to torture for her own clandestine political activity. She went into exile in Australia and East Germany before returning to campaign for the restoration of democracy.

First elected in 2006 and serving two non-consecutive terms, Bachelet left office this year after easing restrictions on abortion and extending recognition to same sex relationships — both contentious moves in a conservative country.



Source: One.org

Chapter

Matthew D Hutcheson for President? What the World Has to Say

Reprinted with permission from Behance.net⁵

...

American Politics

The world is as interested in American politics as Americans are...perhaps even more so. It might surprise Americans to know that people around the world hold favorites whom they hope will one day become President of the United States. The five favorites might surprise you.

1. **Tulsi Gabbard.** Ms. Gabbard is a United States Congresswoman from Hawaii. She was born in American Samoa in 1981 (age 38) and grew up in a mixed-religion household. Her father is a practicing Catholic and her mother is a practicing Hindu. Anyone who watched all or part of the Democratic Presidential Debate on July 31, 2019, watched with delight as Ms. Gabbard sliced-and-diced former California Attorney General, Kamala Harris. A prediction: That moment ended Ms. Harris's chance of being elected President of the United States. The world cheers for Ms. Gabbard. She is smart, articulate and attractive. She instills confidence in people everywhere. She is tough, too. She is a combat war veteran and a martial artist. The world would pay to see her take down Cory Booker in a UFC cage fight. She is running for President of the United States as a Democrat. "President Gabbard" and the "Gabbard Administration" sounds quite nice.
2. **Condoleezza Rice.** Her days in political diplomacy may be over, however, the world would still like to see her become President of the United States one day. She is so elegant and graceful, and at the same time, commands the respect of virtually all men everywhere. She has a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Denver. Dr. Rice served as the 66th United States Secretary of State under then President, George W. Bush. Born in 1954, she is now 65 years old. She may no longer be interested in jumping back into the fray. However, having grown up in racially tense Birmingham, Alabama in the 1950's and 60's, she may be just what the world needs to calm the waves. Dr. Rice is a concert pianist. She is a professor at Stanford University, and as of 2012 was one of only two women to become members of the August National Golf Club. She commands respect in any room or nation, large or small. It would not seem strange at all to call her Ms. President or Commander-in-Chief.
3. **Gayle King.** Although not a politician in the true sense, she easily could be. She is a professional journalist with CBS and has interviewed some of the most powerful people in the world. She is utterly unflappable while interviewing volatile individuals such as R. Kelly. Ms. King spent part of her childhood in Turkey and has earned the respect of people of all races around the world. Her smooth, comforting demeanor would make her a trust-inspiring President. Her best friend is Oprah Winfrey, who could give excellent advice about how to communicate difficult or delicate messages to the American people. Like Condoleezza Rice, Ms. King was also born in 1954, making her 65 years old. Neither Ms. King nor Dr. Rice is too old given that President Trump was 70 when he was elected. Americans, and the world, want and need a leader who can unify all people. Gayle King could do it.
4. **Matthew D. Hutcheson.** Our favorite prisoner. Yes, Mr. Hutcheson is a prisoner of the United States. He is a modern day Nelson Mandela, not because he is black – he is not - (although all people of color love him which is why the world hopes he will be President one day), but because he has taught the world how to remain hopeful, optimistic, and dignified during extreme adversity and tribulation, just like Mandela did. Born in 1970, he is 49 years old and has five sisters. A socio-economic genius, he explained to the United States Congress for the first time in 2007 how Wall Street made its money in an easy to understand way ultimately helping millions of investors. In 2010 he launched a previously untried way for millions of Americans to gain access to affordable health care. From prison, he writes a weekly email update describing everything that happens in

⁵ <https://www.behance.net/gallery/83925949/American-Politics>

prison and shares it with friends and family. Through email forwarding, his weekly updates have gained an underground cult-like following of millions around the world. Our only complaint is that his family has not made those updates readily available to everyone online. Those who are not in the down-stream email forwarding network are out of luck. Perhaps his updates will be published in the future. You can read more great content about Mr. Hutcheson at bellohutch.com.

5. **Candace Owens.** The most controversial of our Presidential hopefuls, Candace Owens, has become the tip of the spear for common sense political thought. Born in 1989, she is 30 years old and was raised in Stamford, Connecticut. Ms. Owens began stirring the political pot when she published the "Red Pill Black" Youtube channel calling out black people everywhere for blindly following the Democrat party. Ms. Owens is a primary advocate for Blexit, which is the "Black Exit" movement from the Democrat Party. She is employed by PragerU, which is owned by radio talk show host, Dennis Prager. PragerU produces educational materials distributed over the Internet on political thought and philosophy. With some refining and coaching, Ms. Owens could be a political force in the future. She is too young to run for President of the United States, but we think she would make an excellent U.S. President down the road. We are hopeful that "President Owens" will be a reality one day.



Tulsi Gabbard

Source: New York Magazine

Chapter #

Is America's Greatest Citizen A Prisoner?

Reprinted with permission from Paula C. Cannon⁶

...

As our nation strains under the weight of strife and division, we look for inspiration anywhere we can find it.

We found some in federal prison.

There are many great American men and women...inventors, scientists, visionaries, entrepreneurs, athletes, and more.

What would those "great" individuals do if they suddenly found themselves in prison?

Would they remain "great?"

What would they do for years and years as they serve their sentence?

Would they become bitter and despondent?

Sadly, bitterness and despondency are typically what happens to nearly all previously "great" individuals when they find themselves in humanity's least-favorable circumstance called prison.

People everywhere both marvel and celebrate Nelson Mandela for how he handled over two decades of unjust imprisonment.

Every year, thousands attend the production of Les Miserables based on the 19th-century book by Victor Hugo whose character, Jean Valjean, heroically triumphs over his prison past.

All human beings are utterly fascinated with prison and its prisoners, especially those who triumph, in spite of it. "It is natural for people to wonder if they would survive the [prison] experience," said former Pentagon official, Jerry L. Melchisedeck, Sr., Lt Col USAF (Ret).

"We just don't hear many stories about people like Mandela anymore. It is rare for someone to rise above it all," said Leon Wilson, a black federal inmate serving his sentence at the federal prison camp in Englewood, Colorado.

It is so rare, in fact, that society can name only a few such individuals, one of whom was Valjean and he was merely a fictional character in a book.

⁶ <https://medium.com/@carmonamed/is-americas-greatest-citizen-a-prisoner-b62971d6cf2d>

"There is a reason why we celebrate individuals like Mandela. Nothing inspires people as much as a prisoner who transcends it all because nothing can touch him emotionally or mentally. We all dream and aspire to attain that state of existence," said Melchisedeck.

Human beings are terrified of prison, and they should be. Prison is one of humanity's worst fears.

Which would you choose? Being covered in snakes or spiders for an hour, or spending an hour in prison along with all that comes with it? The accusations, the indictments, the loss of friends, family, reputation, financial security, not to mention the ever-present physical danger inmates are in from the moment they arrive. Is it even close?

When a prisoner comes along who does what Mandela did, or what Jean Valjean's character did in *Les Misérables*, society cheers. It is what each of us hopes we would do if placed in that circumstance. Everyone loves an underdog.

What defines greatness?

It is said that "Greatness is best measured by how well an individual responds to the happenings in life that appear totally unfair, unreasonable, and undeserved." (Marvin J. Ashton, 1915–2004.)

Matthew D. Hutcheson was imprisoned in 2013 under questionable charges that court records show have long since been debunked. Yet he remains in prison.

His fellow inmates call him the "modern-day Mandela." "Not because he is black," says a recent political article about who the world wants to see as a future American President (although people of color love him), but because "Hutcheson has taught the world how to remain hopeful, optimistic, and dignified during extreme adversity and tribulation, just like Mandela did," said Patrick Williams, a black author from Chicago.

Being unfairly accused of a crime is one thing. Being unlawfully imprisoned for over six years is yet another! Being held in prison by officials who know he is innocent in hopes that the public at large will never discover what the government did to him, is something of another magnitude altogether.

"If greatness is measured by how one handles the collapse of his world, Hutcheson is one of America's greatest citizens," said San Diego attorney, John Millar. "He has shown every human being how to triumph over crushing setbacks and adversity."

"We really need someone to follow right now, and that person happens to be in prison. Sort of ironic, isn't it?" said Wilson.

During his time in prison, Hutcheson has left a trail of afterglow everywhere he has been. (A little known and abhorrent fact: To keep Hutcheson off-balance, in six years, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons has transferred him an unheard-of fourteen times to eight different institutions.)

Hutcheson has influenced thousands of inmates for the better. He receives letters from families of other inmates thanking him for the impact he has had on their son, husband, brother, or father. Hutcheson's family receives similar letters of thanks.

Matthew D. Hutcheson is helping inmates learn to, "love America again," says another article.

TED recently published a college paper Hutcheson wrote with a fellow inmate who was unable to write the paper himself because his first and primary language was Vietnamese and he had virtually no understanding or knowledge of American history. The paper is called "The American Hypothesis," and TED called it "inspiring."

Hutcheson wrote the previously untold story of Wakado (pronounced walk-uh-doo), a Native American who went to prison for 42 years to protect someone he loved. The book is called Quinny, named after Wakado's son. Hutcheson hopes the truth will help Wakado regain his freedom and is confident it will.

His influence for good has stopped multiple suicides, riots, and murders.

"Matthew is a beacon of light. To say this guy is good is a huge understatement," said John Jenkins, a black author, educator, and former inmate whom Hutcheson met in prison.

Hutcheson has been married for 28 years to a woman he loves and who loves him. His children adore him. His parents and five sisters adore him. According to another article, that kind of respect by the women in his life is quite remarkable.

"Hutcheson never looks at risqué pictures. He never takes drugs. He never participates in the consumption of hooch (alcohol made in prison). He is cheerful, steady and consistent each and every day," says Darrell Saunders, who would know, having observed Hutcheson first-hand at two different institutions and who is also his current cellmate.

Jay Inman, Lt Col US Army (Ret) observed in another article, "Many people see life as hard and unfair which robs them of joy. For Matt, we know that life in the extreme of prison has been far more unfair and harsh than that of most people walking around in free society. Yet, that has not robbed Matt of the strength and power of joy. That, in turn, feeds his remarkable courage."

Those who have had the privilege of interacting with Matthew D. Hutcheson are forever changed for the better.

"What other definition fits this man better than 'great'?" asked Saunders.

After reading Hutcheson's 2019 Independence Day message found at BelloHutch.com, we think Hutcheson is "one of America's greatest citizens."



Source: Hutcheson Family Archives

Chapter #

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on November 13, 2020, to his family.

Dear Fam,

Many, if not most of you, have read, Of Mice and Men.

The story I am about to tell you could also be titled, Of Mice and Men, but it is a story about Hutch and MikeGyver and is completely unlike the original story.

MikeGyver is Mike Severson, my roommate.

He is a tender-hearted man. He is just the opposite of what one might expect to see in prison. There are too many tough guys in prison and when someone comes along like Mike, it is a breath of fresh air. Mike is quiet, respectful, a joy to be around, and, frankly, an All-American Boy who found trouble during a low point in his life. He has overcome all of it and it is behind him now. He will be returning home soon to his loved ones.

Want to know what kind of person MikeGyver is?

Here is the story...

When the pandemic shut everything down, the mice decided to infiltrate all the buildings in which human traffic suddenly stopped, including the chow hall, the hobby-craft room, and the chapel. Recently, mice have also begun to infiltrate the library, the education, and TV rooms.

The Warden gave me the job of "compound mouser." My job is to catch and dispose of mice. So far, I have caught 29 mice.

Last week, a number of inmates informed me that there were mice running around in the education room after count, around 10-11PM, and asked me to put down some glue-traps, which I did.

Last night, around 10 PM, I heard Mike's voice.

"Hutch?" he said. "You awake?"

"I am now. What's up?"

"Well, I need to tell you something."

"Okay."

"It's kind of a confession."

I thought to myself, "Mike is the perfect roommate, so it can't be too bad. Perhaps he took some aspirin without asking?" That is about as "out of his lane" Mike would ever go. He is just a totally honest and honorable guy; the kind of guy everyone needs as a friend. Also, he can fix anything if it is broken. I mean anything. That is why people call him MikeGyver.

"Okay, I'm ready. Lay it on me." as I smiled in the dark. "This is going to be good," I thought to myself.

"Well," he began, "last night I was watching TV in the education room..."

It was nothing new. He does that every night.

He continued, "I heard a commotion over where you put one of those traps."

"Hmmm...." I thought. "That is an unexpected thing for him to say" my mind continued. Suddenly I knew where his "confession" was going. I lay quietly as he continued.

"Well, I got up and looked over where the commotion was..."

An uncomfortable pause...

"Yes, go on," I encouraged.

"There was this little baby mouse on your trap. He was so scared!"

"Uh huh," I said softly. "Go on," I said.

"Hutch, he was hyperventilating. His eyes had a terrified look in them. The poor thing was shaking uncontrollably."

"And?"

"And he was so fuzzy and cute, a little brown ball of cuteness, and did I mention he was a baby?"

I took in a big breath and sighed.

"Then what happened?" I inquired as I tried desperately to hold back my laughter and delight as

MikeGyver ramped up his "confession."

"Well, I took a pencil, and I unstuck each little foot from the glue trap and let him go and he scurried away."

"I see."

By then, tears were streaming down my face because it was totally funny, and because Mike did not want to tell me, but he did, and finally, because it was just a totally human moment. A moment of mercy and compassion we never receive from other humans, but that Mike showed to a baby mouse.

"That little guy turned around and looked at me as if to say, 'thank you.'"

"I'm sure he did," I replied.

"Are you mad at me?"

My throat lumped and my diaphragm quivered as I took in a stuttered breath.

"How could I be, Mike? How could I be mad at someone for being one of the best human beings I have ever met?"

Oh, the lessons I have learned from men like my roommate.

I am greatly blessed to have had many such unique and instructive experiences that just are not had anywhere else.

Unmerciful prison

Merciful Mike!

Mouse goes on livin'

Each grateful alike

MOUSE AND MAN

Piet Heim

A human being sharing with a mouse.

Each thinks himself the master of the house.

In fact, of course, each occupier's place is
the other's insulating interspaces.

Perhaps the story should be called, "Of Mice and Mike."



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on February 19, 2017, to his family.

Hi Fam,

This update is for my kids.

For Valentine's Day, Mom (Annette) sent me several magazines. She knows how much I enjoy reading magazines after a long day of legal work. One of the magazine's was a "TIME" special edition called "The Science of Marriage...All About Attraction, What Keeps Love Strong, Making the Union Last."

Obviously I was intrigued the most by that magazine, and decided to read it first. Before I began, I knew that I might have a yellow highlighter in hand so I could identify those parts that I thought were worth remembering.

I know it comes as no surprise that there is "magic in our marriage." It is so special, as far as I am concerned.

Buy why? What makes your parents' marriage so magnificent and special? All of the reasons cannot be listed in a simple email as this, and the TIME magazine doesn't come close to capturing the true essence of the feelings created in my heart by the mere thought of your mother, it does make a few really great observations. I want to share those with you.

Here are the quotes from the TIME magazine in sequential order highlighted as I read and my comments "[True]."

"Americans today have elevated their expectations of marriage and can in fact achieve an unprecedentedly high level of marital quality." **TRUE.**

"Couples who have made it all the way later into life have found it [marriage] to be a peak experience, a sublime experience to be together." **TRUE.**

"[Marriage], the ultimate dream: a partner who sees what you really are and not only accepts it but improves it. The promise you make is not just to be faithful and true and to stay married but to try to bring out the best in each other." **TRUE.**

"Evidence keeps piling up that few things are as good for [us] as staying married." **TRUE.**

"To try and understand, really deeply understand, what the other one wants and hold her or his feet to the fire and say, 'ok, this is great, but remember what you wanted and don't let go of that dream.'" **TRUE.**

"Being married is like sharing a basement with a fellow hostage; after five years there are very few off-putting things you won't know about each other. After 10 years there are none. After 25 years, you're ready to put his or her eyes out." [The last part of the quote was simply meant to be funny. And it is NOT true. Just a little marital humor. But the rest of it is TRUE.] "In later life, your relationship becomes very much like it was during your courtship." **TRUE.**

"The surprising thing is that the longer people are together, the more the sense of kindness returns. Our research is starting to reveal that in later life." **TRUE.**

"What men do in the relationship is, by a large margin, the crucial factor that separates a great relationship from a failed one. Data proves that a man's actions are the key variable that determines whether a relationship succeeds or fails." **TRUE.**

[A comment to my sons...engage in "emotional labor in your marriage." This means do the dishes and the laundry (and more), drive the kids to school. Rub your wife's feet every night. Be kind. Listen. Listen more. Listen harder. Stop "telling" and start "talking." Tell your wife you love her. Show her even more. Don't be a jerk. From a man who has failed in all of these more than once, I am sharing wisdom I have learned first hand. Learn to be a great husband from your Dad's failures and his sincere efforts to recognize those failures and do better.]

"The one piece of advice every expert and nonexpert gives for staying married is perhaps the least useful one for those who are already several years in: CHOSE WELL. The cascade of hormones that rains down on humans when they first fall in love, while completely necessary and wonderful, can sometimes blind individuals to their poor choices." **TRUE.** I am SO THANKFUL I chose your Mom. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't thank Heaven for her. Always be thankful for your spouse and tell him or her more than once per day.

"Like superheroes, every happily married duo has an origin story, and most of these how-we-met tales contain important nuggets of truth about the mysterious forces that draw two strangers, magnet-like, toward each other." **TRUE.**

"How well you tell [your] origin story may be a powerful clue to the health of your relationship." It must be told with a sense of "fondness and solidarity." **TRUE.**

"The most successful marriages have a ratio of five positive feelings and actions to every one that's negative." **TRUE.**

"There are three actions that harm a marriage the most. "Defensiveness, criticism, and stonewalling." **TRUE.** Avoid those and do just the opposite to build a healthy marriage like that of your parents.

Why are some couples able to sustain that intoxicating zing for a lifetime? Go back to the quote above about engaging in "emotional labor." Men, take the lead and that intoxicating "zing" will be there!

Ok, that's enough for now.

I hope you will print and save this and refer to it from time to time. I love your Mom with my whole soul. She does in fact cause me to feel that "intoxicating zing" and always has. She is so magnificent I cannot express it in words. My sincere hope is that each of you will remember these bits of wisdom and you create and enjoy the same "magic" your parents have and continue to enjoy.

Life in the Extreme,

Matt



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter

Who is Alan Watts?

A prolific author and speaker, Alan Watts was one of the first to interpret Eastern wisdom for a Western audience. Born outside London in 1915, he discovered the nearby Buddhist Lodge at a young age. After moving to the United States in 1938, Alan became an Episcopal priest for a time, and then relocated to Millbrook, New York, where he wrote his pivotal book *The Wisdom of Insecurity: A Message for an Age of Anxiety*. In 1951 he moved to San Francisco where he began teaching Buddhist studies, and in 1956 began his popular radio show, "Way Beyond the West." By the early sixties, Alan's radio talks aired nationally and the counterculture movement adopted him as a spiritual spokesperson. He wrote and traveled regularly until his passing in 1973.⁷

"Perhaps the foremost interpreter of Eastern disciplines for the contemporary West, Alan Watts had the rare gift of 'writing beautifully the un-writable'. Watts begins with scholarship and intellect and proceeds with art and eloquence to the frontiers of the spirit. A fascinating entry into the deepest ways of knowing." —

LA Times

Alan Watts

Let it Happen by Itself

Music as an art form is essentially playful, we say you play the piano, you don't work the piano. Why music differs from, say, travel, when you travel, you are trying to get somewhere. And of course, we because being a very compulsive and purposive culture are busy getting everywhere faster and faster and faster until we eliminate the distance between places. I mean, with modern jet travel, you can arrive almost instantaneously. What happens as a result of that is that the two ends of your journey become the same place.

So you eliminate the distance and you eliminate the journey because the fun of the journey is to travel, not to obliterate travel. So then. In music, no one doesn't make the end of a composition, the point of the composition. If that was so, the best conductors would be those who played fastest and there would be composers who wrote only finales. People go to concerts just to hear one crashing chord because that's the end. They went dancing.

You don't aim at a particular spot in the room. That's where you should arrive. The whole point of the dancing is the dance with the people who live to retire and put those savings away. And then when they are 65, they don't have any energy left. They're more or less important, and they go and rot in an old people's senior citizens community because we've simply treated ourselves the whole way down the line.

We thought of life by analogy with a journey, with a pilgrimage which had a serious purpose at the end. The thing was to get to that end success or whatever it is, or maybe heaven after your death. But we missed the point the whole way along. It was a musical thing and you were supposed to sing or dance while the music was being played. But you had to do that thing, you didn't let it happen. And so for this in this way, the human being sometimes becomes an organism for self frustration.

⁷ <https://www.alanwatts.org/life-of-alan-watts/>

Let's take a call man time binde. That means that he's the animal peculiarly aware of the time sequence and as a result of this is able to do some very remarkable things he can predict. He studies what's happened in the past and he says the chances are so-and-so of that happening again. So he predicts that this is very useful to be able to predict because that has survival value. But at the same time, it creates anxiety. You pay for this increased survival ability involved in prediction by knowing that in the end, you won't succeed.

We're all going to fall apart by one way or another. It might happen tomorrow, might happen 50 years from now. But it all comes apart in the end. When people get worried about that, they get anxious. So what they gain on the roundabout, they lost on the swings. So then. If you see, on the other hand, that existence this is, as I said, my basic metaphysical assumption, which I won't conceal from you, that existence is musical in nature.

That is to say that it is not serious. It is the play of all kinds of patterns. We could look upon different creatures as we look at different games, as we look at chess, checkers, backgammon, tennis, the tree game, the beautiful game, McGraths game. Or you can look at them as you look at different styles of music, Mazurkas, Waltz's Sonata, etc., etc. all down the line. There are all these different things doing their stuff.

And we are doing the. Now, existence, you see, is something that is spontaneous, the Chinese word for nature, "Tzu Jan" means that which happens of itself. Your hair grows by itself, your heart beats by itself. You breathe pretty much by itself.

Your glands secrete their essences by themselves. You don't have voluntary control over these things. So we say it happens spontaneously. So when you go to sleep and you try to go to sleep, you interfere with the spontaneous process of going to sleep, try to breathe real hard and you find you get balled up and your breathing.

So. If you if you're going to be human, you just have to trust yourself to have bowel movements and go to sleep and adjust your food, of course, if something goes seriously wrong and you need a surgeon, that's another matter. But by and large, the healthy human being doesn't right from the start of life need surgical interference. And he lets it happen by by itself. So with the whole picture that is fundamental to you got to let go and let it happen, because if you do not, you're going to be all clutched up.

You're going to be constantly trying to do what can happen healthily, only if you don't try.

無為

Wuwei

Source: TheSchoolofLife.com

Chapter #

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on January 6, 2019, to his family.

Dear Fam,

I want each of you to know how much I love and respect you. Thank you for being in my life. You give me great joy and happiness, and I am thrilled with the possibilities that lay ahead.

Ahh...possibilities.

"A possibility is a hint from God. One must follow it."

Consider the following:

"A shoe factory sends two marketing scouts to a region of Africa to study the prospects for expanding business.

One sends back a telegram saying, 'SITUATION HOPELESS...STOP...NO ONE WEARS SHOES.' The other writes back triumphantly, 'GLORIOUS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY...STOP...THEY HAVE NO SHOES!'" (Zander and Zander, 2000, The Art of Possibility, pg. 9)

Hopelessness because there is no demand for shoes?

Or thrilling possibility at the opportunity to sell shoes to everyone?

Let there be no doubt...life is full of possibility.

There is always a way.

There is always a door or window.

There is always a solution.

The sun will rise.

Light will come.

Hope will return.

Happiness awaits.

Joy knocks and asks to be let in.

Finally, never, ever forget that when one's heart desires something great, only adversity, challenge, and trial can capacitate that heart to receive greatness. It is the only way.
Embrace it.

Life in the Extreme,
Matt



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter

Leonard Bernstein, in his essay, "The Mountain Disappears," said:

"One human being who meets with injustice can render invalid the entire system which had dispensed it."



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on December 9, 2019, to his family.

...

What do prisoners know that you don't?

Make Your Wife Happy and Start Acting Like an Inmate.

If you want to make your wife really happy, sit down to urinate. Oh stop with the bravado! It doesn't make you less of a man. It actually makes you look smart. When you are finished, leave the toilet seat down.

Prisoners have figured something out that you haven't yet. In a 6x9 cell, the bottom bunk is mere inches from the stainless-steel toilet. When one stands to urinate, it splatters everywhere, especially on the lower bunk. That makes "Bubba" angry. Wouldn't it make you angry?

How do you think your wife feels? She cleans up your splatter from the toilet and bathroom floor!

The fastest way to guarantee a shank in your liver at 2AM is to splatter on "Bubba's" bed.

The truth is, your wife resents you as much as "Bubba" does. The only difference is that she won't shank you, but believe me, she wants to.

It wouldn't be so maddening to her if you would sanitize the bathroom everyday like prisoners do. But you don't. You make her do it, so you deserve that 2AM surprise. (No, it's not "that" surprise; it's the "sharpend steel" variety.)

"Bubba" is more manly than you. If he sits down, so should you.

Make your wife happy and start acting like an inmate.



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

A Poem About Matthew D. Hutcheson, Written by His Mother, Carol Hutcheson

...

For Matt

The darkness hangs heavy in prison

Gray, cold, oppressive, threatening, hopeless

Filled with fear, dominated with doubt, dank with despair

A congregation of convicted—druggies, deviates, deceivers

Somewhere someone curses God, one bullies his buddy, another wastes away,

But not so for my son Matt.

Despite being falsely framed, politically punished, repeatedly rejected,

He's a brave beacon blocking the black.

From the darkness he sends updates, memorializes memories, authors novels

Sometimes on a paper pad with the floppy inside of ballpoint pen

Sometimes at an aged typewriter or a down-level computer.

He prepares legal motions for freedom

He writes about people he's met

He testifies about faith in his Savior

He sends letters which multiply love

Amidst ignorance, he teaches knowledge

Amidst despair, he offers hope

Against fear, he commands courage

In darkness, he radiates light.

— Carol M. Hutcheson



A Mother's Love

Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on March 26, 2017, to his family.

...

Crackah Crushah

Dear Fam,

Every morning I get up and take a walk. It is usually still dark outside, and it is usually cool/crisp. This is the time when I say my prayers and ponder. While I walk and pray. Slowly it gets light outside and then the sun rises above the green rolling hills of central California. It is magnificently beautiful. It is quiet. I can think. I can feel. I can see. I can hear. One good thing about prison that I simply have to acknowledge is the brief periods of peace and quiet (while the animals are still asleep). Those things that are often so difficult due to the hustle-and-bustle of daily life can actually be enjoyed in the early morning hours here.

There is a little "old man" squirrel here. His fur is gray. But he is not a gray squirrel. He's just old. And he is blind.

Ever hear that saying that "even a blind squirrel finds a nut now and then?" Well, it turns out that saying is true!!

The squirrel's name is "CC." This stands for "Crackah' Crushah" - to be said by rolling the "R" and with an Eastern European accent. Sort of like, "We're here to...pump...you up!"

Anyway, CC is hilarious. He walks up to inmates without any hesitation and waits until he is given a cracker. Then, well, HE CRUSHES it! That is prison jargon for eating intently without distraction. One could literally pick up CC while he is eating and he might not even know it!

The thing about CC that is so hilarious is that while he is holding the cracker, he gets so excited he stands straight up and fails to use his tail to balance. After a moment he falls right over onto his back and just lays there crushing his cracker. It makes me laugh so hard! Then, he gets up and the whole scene repeats itself. If I could record it, CC would have a huge following online. He's simply delightful and funny beyond words.

I love all of you and I so thankful for all of you. I hope you have a blessed Sunday and know that I am always thinking about and praying for you. Other than some seasonal allergies, I am healthy and strong and at peace.

Life in the Extreme,

Matt



Crackah Crushah
Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on March 26, 2017, to his family.

Dear Fam,

Words cannot adequately express how I feel right now. Annette came and spent the weekend with me. It was simply magnificent. I love her beyond any ability to express that love, and my heart leaps with joy at the thought of her, let alone the sight of her.

Annette and I sat outside in a visiting area. Think of it as a "beach-like" picnic area with sand and ocean grasses.

It was windy like the beach. It smelled like the ocean. Little gophers played peak-a-boo all day long. We ate vending machine food and laughed and brought each other up to speed on many fronts.

Annette and I prayed together as we held hands. I get a lump in my throat just thinking about it.

Annette says my hair is whiter, but I think it was just the sun. She also said my hair looks thinner, but I think it was just because it is shorter. Oh, okay. She's right! I'll be 47 next month. But who cares? I feel like I'm 21 and in love with Annette more now than ever - and growing by the day!

My face, neck, head, and arms are burnt to a crisp, notwithstanding having lathered my entire head in three applications of sunscreen.

Here's the picture....Matthew in the bathroom covered (yes, hair, too) in white sunscreen as thick as Mrs.

Doubtfire's whipped-cream-pie-face (helloooooo). Two southsiders and a black guy walk into the bathroom and stop dead in their tracks, startled.

"Hey Hutch...everything okay, homey?"

"Oh, yeah, just putting on some sunscreen. Why do you ask?"

"Uh, bro, well your head looks like Martha Stewart turned it into a parfait. Do you need another bottle or two of sunscreen? We can try to find some for you." (snickering to each other)

"Ah, heck guys! Thanks! You are too nice. But I'm just about finished."

"Ummm...you're going to rub that in or something, right?"

"Think I should?"

"You're killin' us Hutch! You've got a great rep on the yard. Don't mess it up! Even we'd be embarrassed to be seen with you looking like that!"

We burst into laughter. Too funny!

When I kissed Annette, I left a HUGE greasy sunscreen smudge on her face.

Annette is so beautiful and graceful. I love staring into her eyes. She has gained much strength, wisdom, and dignity through this experience.

I hope and pray the Almighty will smile upon me this year and let me return to our little Idaho paradise so that I may serve Him and comfort those who stand in need of comfort.

For I have much to give, as I have been given much. And I have much comfort to give, as I have been abundantly comforted.

I am a true believer in Almighty God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only hope for mankind's happiness and wellbeing. Here's proof...Heaven has smiled upon me by blessing me with each of you. I sincerely hope Carol Hutcheson 5/7/2017ofPage 21 Carol Hutcheson I am a true believer in Almighty God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only hope for mankind's happiness and wellbeing. Here's proof...Heaven has smiled upon me by blessing me with each of you. I sincerely hope each of you will feel the feeling I am trying to convey and know that I love you, I care deeply about you, and I hope to see each of you soon in person.

Life in the Extreme,

Matt



Source: Twiends.com

Chapter

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on May 7, 2017, to his family.

Dear Fam,

Annette and I have always reserved Friday nights for ourselves to go out on a date. Our Friday dates are sacred to us. Even when I was in D.C. or N.Y.C., I would make sure to be home in time. Rarely did we ever miss one. It was such a special time for us. Even now we have a Friday night date by phone where we just talk and laugh and convey our love for each other.

Years ago, when we still lived in Oregon, Annette and I were on one of our Friday night dates. After a nice dinner, we decided to stop by Lowes, the home and garden store. I can't remember what we were looking for, but we were going up and down the aisles. Annette stopped in a section and was looking at something.

While standing in the aisle, for some strange reason, I noticed how the large industrial shelving was put together.

Each shelf was locked into the large corner anchor pillar/columns that hold all the shelves in place. Shelves, at each corner, have a little peg, for lack of a better description, with a nickel-coin-sized head. The shelf peg is placed through a hole in the pillar/column a little larger than a nickel, and is then eased down into a holding groove where it sits securely in place.

Well, it was that nickel-coin-sized hole that caught my eye. I don't know why, but I decided to stick my finger in that hole. Just hours earlier my flight arrived from Washington D.C., and I was still in my suit and tie. I got to the house, dropped off my bags, and swept Annette out the door to our date and left the kids with Jessica in charge.

So, back to my finger. Here I was, in my suit I wore to my meetings with Congress, (looking like an accomplished, intelligent man) with my finger in a hole in the shelving pillar/column hole...stuck (looking and feeling like an idiot).

Annette began to walk further down the aisle. Meanwhile, I was frantically trying to get my finger out. It wasn't coming out. Annette, noticing that I hadn't followed her, turned around and saw me trying to get my finger out of the shelving unit.

She came back down the aisle and said, "what on earth are you doing?"

"I got my finger stuck in this shelving hole."

"How did you do that?"

"I don't know" (tugging, starting to panic) "More importantly, WHY did you do that??"

Ashamed and embarrassed, I said with a droopy tone, "I don't know the answer to that question, either. I'm sorry."

Annette smiled and laughed, but I think she might have been a little embarrassed, too, because now Lowes shoppers were starting to congregate wondering what was going on. Rubber neck'rs!!!

Annette took my finger and pulled it straight, squished it near the knuckle, and said, "pull now!" I did, and my finger came right out!

Well, as you can imagine, I was truly humiliated. It was just an utterly stupid and thoughtless thing to do, but I did it anyway.

You may be wondering why I have shared this embarrassing story with you. It's because I have a new one!!

Four days ago I was drinking a cold soda from a can. It was quite refreshing because that day was the warmest day we had had this year. While I was talking to a few guys, my eye, for some strange reason, locked on to the opening of that soda can, that just happened to be the same size of the hole in the Lowes shelving pillar/column.

What do you think I did? Yep! I repeated that ridiculous event!

So, here's the scene: My finger is stuck in a soda can, in front of about 50 inmates, all who are less-than-sympathetic about stuff like this.

Embarrassed, once again, I twisted the soda can off my finger and sliced it wide open. Worried about MRSA, I immediately washed and bandaged it. Thankfully, no infection... just the "to-be-expected teasing" from those who are confused by the act, (in the words of one inmate): "how can someone as intelligent as you do something so utterly stupid?"

(Isn't that always the question we all ask ourselves after we do something we regret?) This is not an analogy about how I ended up in prison. The investments I made to create jobs and greater access to health care for a small community in Idaho (as a prototype for what I intended to do nationally) is the greatest professional accomplishment of my life to-date, and only falls behind marrying Annette, raising my family, and maintaining my character and integrity through this entire experience. It is something I am extremely proud to have done. Were my actions intentionally misunderstood? Yes. Intentionally mischaracterized? For sure. Intentionally twisted to make it seem different than it actually is? Certainly. But stupid or illegal? Not remotely. It was honorable then and is honorable now. I am so very proud of what I did.)

The things I regret in my life are mostly innocent and primarily fall in the realm of "finger-stuck-in-can" stupidity.

And because of this prison experience, most of my roughness-around-the-edges, I believe, have been neatly polished to a smooth shine.

The benevolent act of trying to help my fellow Americans, with the knowledge of THE VERY SAME CONGRESSMEN I had met with the day before my notorious finger-fiasco at the Tigard Oregon Lowes, is the greatest professional accomplishment of my life. Yet, these two events, being at opposite ends of the intelligence spectrum, occurred within 48 hours of each other. I'm laughing at myself just thinking about it!! Isn't being human wonderful?!

Lessons Learned:

- (1) Always do what is right, let the consequences follow.
- (2) Keep your fingers out of industrial shelving and soda pop cans.
- (3) To Ryan and Ethan, don't embarrass your wives on your Friday night dates.

Life in the Extreme, Matt

P.S., speaking of my greatest professional accomplishment, you may be wondering how all of the D.C. talk about health care legislation affects this great accomplishment. Not to worry. It is safe. No matter what Congress does now to try to fix/replace ObamaCare, they will only end up making things worse. Full steam ahead with SAVE AMERICA.

P.S.S., my native friends just gave me some deep fried bean, cheese, and sausage burritos. They were cooked over an open fire near their sweat lodge. The natives are always feeding me stuff they cook out there. Gotta love them!



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

Chapter #

Update from prison written by Matthew D. Hutcheson on June 18, 2017, to his family.

Dear Fam,

For you fathers out there, HAPPY FATHER'S DAY! I have a wonderful father who I love and adore, and I want you to know, Dad, that you are my hero for teaching me all of the things that really matter in life. Bless you!

Well, this past week was the most bizarre week of my life. Yes, you read that correctly. Of my life! Regrettably, I can't tell you anything about it! My attorney made a special trip from San Diego yesterday to visit me so I recite and detail the events to him. This week I will memorialize everything and mail it to my attorney for safe keeping so it can be (or may be) included in a published volume of these updates at some point in the future. Suffice it to say that Lompoc is not like any other place I've been. It is "real" prison, and it is an ugly place. (If you really must know what happened, you can ask Annette to tell you, but I can't promise she will. It's her call.)

On a more uplifting note, I have a friend here named Ron. He has a withered leg and foot that is essentially curled up behind his other leg. Ron moves around the compound in his wheelchair and is frequently found "racing" other inmates from place to place. His good leg is out in front of him to steer, maneuver, and slow his momentum or prevent collisions. He's a good natured fellow. He and I get along really well. I've never seen him in a sour mood and he is always upbeat.

Yesterday, I saw Ron out-and-about.

I said, "Ron's how's it going?"

Ron said, "Well, I just keep putting my best foot forward."

After an awkward pause, he and I burst into laughter! His "best foot!" Of course!

Then, he added, "it's how I roll!"

More smiles and laughter. Hearing a guy in a wheelchair talking about his "best foot" given his other is withered, and how he "rolls" when he in fact rolls everywhere, was a pleasant surprise of optimism and good attitude.

Atta boy, Ron!! Isn't he just a ray of sunshine?!

My dear family. Please keep putting your best foot forward. It's how we roll.

Life in the Extreme,

Matt



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

"Mr. Miyagi 2020. 'Mask on, Mask off.'"

Matthew D. Hutcheson

www.facebook.com/mdhbooks

www.bellohutch.com

Chapter

Epilogue from Quinny

www.quinnythebook.com

Les Misérables

Professor Chris Hedges, a professor at Princeton University, spent 4 months in 2018 teaching Victor Hugo's 1862 novel, "Les Misérables" to inmates at a maximum-security prison in New Jersey.

The impact of this novel on the minds and hearts of his student-inmates cannot be overstated.

He says,

"There is a moment in the novel when a man named Champ Mathieu is hauled into court and accused of being [Jean] Valjean [the novel's main character], who has broken parole and is living under the assumed name of Monsieur Madeleine. Javert and three witnesses who were in prison with Valjean insist the man is Valjean. Valjean, under his pseudonym, has become the prosperous mayor of Montreuil-sur-Mer. If he remains silent, allowing the innocent Champ Mathieu to go to prison in his place, he will throw the police off his trail permanently. During a night of anguished indecision, he burns his last personal effects from this life as a convict, but then sees the coin he stole from the boy when he left the bishop's house; a coin that represents his last crime and his transformation. He goes to the courtroom. He announces to the stunned court that he is Valjean. He condemns himself but recovers his name. He saves his soul.

The importance of a name, and the idea that carrying out a moral act means you will be crucified by the ruling elites, intrigued my students, most of whom, like Valjean, are known by their prison numbers. Valjean, Hugo wrote, sacrificed 'his own personal security to his moral principles' and 'had, it seems, concluded after the manner of saints and sages, that his first duty was not to himself.' Jean Valjean, through this act of self-sacrifice, emerged from the court 'even more honored and secure than before.' He had, in Hugo's words, 'taken up the cross.'

Hugo went on:

Certainly, his life had a purpose, but was it simply to hide himself, to outwit the police? Had everything he had done been for no better reason than this? Had he not had a greater purpose, the saving not of his life but of his soul, the resolve to become a good and honorable and upright man as the bishop required of him had not that been his true and deepest intention? How he talked of closing the door on the past, when God helped him, he would be reopening the door by committing an infamous act, not merely that of a thief but of the most odious of thieves. He would be robbing a man of his life, his peace, his place in the sun, morally murdering him by condemning him to the living death that is called a convict prison. But if, on the other hand, he saved the man by repairing the blunder, by proclaiming himself Jean Valjean the felon, this would be to achieve his own true resurrection and firmly close the door on the hell from which he sought to escape. To return it to appearance would be to escape from it in reality. This was what he must do, and without it he would have accomplished nothing, his life would be wasted, his repentance meaningless, and there would be nothing left for him to say except, 'who cares?'

Hugo added: 'It was his most melancholy destiny that he could achieve sanctity in the eyes of God only by returning to degradation in the eyes of men.' He is filled with terror yet proceeds. 'Whichever way he looked,' Hugo wrote, 'the course of his duty glared at him as though the words were written in letters of fire 'Stand up and say your name!' He could 'cling to his paradise and become a devil or become a saint by going back to hell.'

To save Champ Mathieu, Valjean gives up his freedom. In this singular act of justice and heroic self-sacrifice he exposes the bankruptcy and corruption of the courts, including the lie of authority. He elevates a convict, Jean Valjean, to a higher morality. He redeems his name and the names of all convicts. The price is catastrophic. But the price of moral acts is usually catastrophic. No one is rewarded for virtue. In my class, this chapter triggered a discussion of Immanuel Kant's 'categorical imperative,' the idea that there are things we must do no matter what the consequences. The moral life, as Hugo pointed out, is not pragmatic or rational. It does not guarantee that we as distinct individuals survive. And yet, it permits us, by living for others, to become our best selves. It allows us bittersweet happiness."⁸

Thus we see, that in the real-life drama of Tenny, Wakado, and Quinny, that there are truly heroes - moral giants - among us; yes even when tragic failures occur injuring the innocent; yet, during the saga, one individual saves the second at one end of the continuum, and the second saves the first at the opposite end.

Society must acknowledge the greatness of the fiction-less bravery of father and son. Such courage and loyalty, perhaps, is the definition of honor. Does not society place such moral excellence and honor in its highest regard?

This tale is a true, real-life Valjean - Champ Mathieu story.

Wakado lived in Champ Mathieu's shoes for nearly 20 years. His morally courageous son, Quinny, did the terrifying thing that very few have the integrity to do.

He has "stood up and said his name!"

In the end, Quinny came to know one thing for certain, as summed up by Leo Tolstoy's dictum: "The only certain happiness in life is to live for others."

Certain happiness awaits the hearts of all those wounded on December 8, 1999, for Quinny is living his life for Wakado. Few know the depth of his courage.

"Don't be scared."

⁸ The entire Les Misérables post from Professor Hedges can be found at:

<https://www.truthdig.com/articles/teaching-les-miserables-in-prison/> All quotes used with permission requested.