

Robert LeFevre: “Truth is Not a Half-way Place”

By
Carl Watner

Foreword by Karl Hess

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Foreword – “A Man for All Seasons and Many Reasons”

by Karl Hess

It is a measure of the breadth of Robert LeFevre’s influence and character that so many will remember him for so many different reasons. Teacher. Schoolmaster. Consultant. Businessman. Philosopher. Soldier. Religionist. Social Theorist. Debater. Author. Socratic Goad. Experimenter. Maddening Demander of Consistency. Searcher. Finder. Good Friend. Implacable Foe. All of that is detailed in this book.

My special reason for remembering him is civility. His. Not mine. Being given to temper and rash actions, I always felt that Bob was a great anchor to windward, reminding me that it is possible, indeed desirable, to keep a steady helm and an even keel even in the stormiest debate or contention.

Bob’s civility was majestic. It made him seem as a great rock around which angry waves could crash, but which they could never submerge or move.

Bob actually acted as though humans, being rational, would recognize thoughts that coincided with material reality, and then act accordingly. That belief, that informed thought will move an individual — an institution — a people — to action is one of the human race’s most enduring optimisms.

But many develop cynicism, seeing such a belief as an illusion. Others, doubting people will change themselves, see it as a rationale for imposing their ideas on others.

LeFevre seemed to me to be an alternative. He acted on his beliefs. He certainly encouraged others to do the same, to understand what he understood. But he neither despaired cynically of the project, or roared in frustration for a crusade to teach the heathen. He saw the world in terms of individuals. His appeal was not to society. It was not to history, or humanity, or future generations, or to any such abstraction.

His differences would be with you. His agreement would be with you. He did not want to change the world. Individuals changing were the only way the world would ever change. And he felt that only you could change yourself. He did not, to cut to the core of it, want intermediaries of coercion in that process. Life, in his view, should be a matter of self-controlled, volitional actions between free humans.

Of all the intermediary forces that LeFevre despised and abhorred, violence was foremost. According to him, violence — certainly not money — was the root of all evil. Without violence, for instance, all humans would be free to make up their own minds about their own lives. The alternative to violence was infinitely more exciting: the opportunities for self-owned and self-controlled individuals to make voluntary agreements among themselves.

LeFevre’s main point, which he once summed up in an interview, was that each of us should “Do as you please — but harm no other in his person or property.”

From that position can be extrapolated everything that LeFevre taught and talked about. He tenaciously held that the individual was the key to it all. Not tides of history. Not winds of war. Not storms of ideology. Not pressure of politics. The individual must and does make up his or her own mind whether to be free or controlled. The person who submits to outside control “believes” that some one or some institution has the authority, the right to control the person. But, LeFevre believed that by nature humans are free, unique, and if they will it, absolutely able to control themselves.

Perhaps the most discord and confusion were generated by those who viewed his position as simple pacifism. His position rejected violence even in self-defense. He could see no gain for freedom in using the tool of tyranny — violence. But his wasn’t a position of simple pacifism, not a position simply in opposition to violence. It was a position in favor of the centrality of individualism, with violence seen as something to be resisted, not in the abstract, but in the concrete sense that it violated human self-control.

I have known many who profess what I think of as simple pacifism. They focus on the violence itself. They will not be violent against anyone else. To be violent would be to sin against someone, to commit a wrong against the person to whom the violence is directed. LeFevre's point was subtle, and different. Although he shared the pacifist's concern of what violence would do to someone else, LeFevre especially abhorred it because of what it would do to him! He taught that inflicting violence corrupts one's own character. LeFevre was 100% consistent in a position from which he would absolutely refuse to harm another person. He could obviously hope that the refusal to do harm would be reciprocated, but he also knew that only he could be responsible for his own actions.

He proclaimed his position. He taught it to all who would, voluntarily, listen. He would impose it upon no one. And he would live by his position as an individual though the entire universe might be against him.

LeFevre's whole world view was a wonderfully comprehensive one. This is best seen by his attitude toward politics and government.

He did not believe for an instant in the possibility of good coming from political action, nor did he harbor any illusion about "improving" an institution so dependent upon violence as the State. The institution was beyond redemption, in his view, since — even with angels at the controls — it would still depend upon violence to enforce its actions.

He realized that some people want to be controlled by government. He never suggested that they be denied the fulfillment of that need. He never suggested overthrowing the politics that fed that need. He did advocate withdrawing from it completely. "Let the State exist for those who want it, but let it not harm me or any other who does not want it."

Just as his refusal to engage in violence was not simple pacifism, his denunciation of the State was not simple anarchism. Anarchism, which is opposition to the institution of the State, is an ideological shelter for many positive forces as well as the single negative one of opposing the State.

It was many of those positive forces that LeFevre opposed with as much vigor as he opposed the State itself. For instance, the attacks by many anarchists against private property were absolutely contrary to LeFevre's dictum of doing what you will without harming another. Peaceful humans who produce wealth, or other property, or who claim land, would never be dispossessed in a truly free society, one free of the institutionalized violence of the State. The ownership of self implies the ownership of those things associated with the labors of the self. Thus property. To dispossess someone of property, no matter how benign the motive, implies the use of force, violence.

On the other hand, the single negative position of anarchism, opposition to the State, was too narrow for LeFevre. He felt that the positive virtues of individualism were greater than mere opposition to an institution.

LeFevre's position most closely parallels libertarian or free market anarchism, with its consistent defense of rights of ownership, and of individual self-ownership. Yet, he saw as clearly as anyone a most interesting paradox. Some of these same libertarians participated in political action, even while forswearing the use of force to accomplish political, social, or personal goals. How, he often goaded them, could they both renounce force while participating in a process founded fully upon it?

Education, person-by-person, no matter how tedious and slow, was the only fitting course for the improvement of the human condition - the only course consistent with what LeFevre saw as the nature of humans to be absolute controllers of their own selves. Education of the individual, the freedom education which is at the heart of this book, was the only alternative which justified its ends by its means.

It is a great measure of the civility of Bob LeFevre, that he could gently abide — without approving— the actions and friendship of many who, for simply utilitarian purposes (being nowhere near as composed in principle as Bob was), flirted with politics. As one of those myself, I was always mindful of Bob's great patience, the truly caring nature of his advice, and, finally, the clear rightness of his principles.

Of all the people I have known, Bob LeFevre, more than anyone else, would want every

individual to steer his or her own course, being fully responsible for its every twist and turn. LeFevre left us all a fine example and a magnificent chart. He did not leave us any command to sail. That, he knew, and we all should know, is up to each of us.

“What we need in America is not more law to protect us from inferior goods or negative ideas. What we need in this country is more salesmen for America, more men and women who believe in independence, in free enterprise, and in the responsibility of individuals to work out their own destinies.” April 26, 1953

Chapter 1 – Born to be Different

“Dan, oh Dan!” The young man came awake with a start, and immediately sensed that something had gone wrong. “Your wife will be fine. The baby is a boy, but there is a serious problem.” Hesitating only a moment, the doctor went on, “The little fellow was born with a rare birth defect called spina bifida, which means that the flesh that would ordinarily cover his spine is split, leaving the spinal column exposed. It is doubtful that your son will live for more than a few hours, and, if he does survive, he will surely never walk.”

Dan LeFevre hunched into the corner of the small hospital waiting room his head in his hands, as though to close himself away from the world, and the doctor left him to his grief.

“My God,” he raged inwardly, “will this nightmare never end?” Dating its beginning at just a few months after the minister had pronounced Ethel Thomas, better known as Bonnie, to be his lawful wedded wife, Dan tried to recall a time when life had seemed good and full of promise. Having attained a Bachelor’s Degree in Science in just three years, he was a whiz in mathematics, spoke and read German fluently, understood Latin, and had served as an assistant professor before receiving his diploma. He had felt well prepared when he set out from his hometown, Sterling, Illinois, and came west to seek his fortune.

Settling in Brainerd, Minnesota, he accepted a position as school teacher until something more appropriate to his talents came along. Later, as principal of the high school, he still felt himself grossly underpaid.

Bonnie had certainly concurred in that. She had expected a school principal’s salary to be on a level with her physician father’s income, and she never tired of letting him know of her disappointment. Yet, when he sought to supplement his principal’s pay by taking door-to-door sales jobs during the summer months, she complained that such was beneath his professional status. Arguments ensued.

Had there ever been a time when they hadn’t argued? Having had little in the way of education, she had never been his intellectual equal, but he had fallen head-over-heels in love with the pert little postal clerk the first time he had laid eyes on her. Standing a dainty four feet ten inches tall, she had curves in all the right places, and the face of an angel. She had beautiful, long, dark brown hair, and the most unusual eyes he’d ever seen — half brown, half blue. She had seemed in those days to hang on his every word, and he had been charmed by her uncluttered outlook on life. Perhaps as a result of her Quaker background she had a sublime faith in the rightness of things, if one were only willing to work and fulfill one’s obligations.

The birth of their daughter, Lauris, four years earlier, had been cause for rejoicing, but their financial struggles continued to be a bone of contention between them. When they heard of the free government land available for homesteading in Idaho, it seemed to be the perfect answer. Bonnie considered farming to be a respectable calling and Dan, having grown up on a farm, had some firsthand knowledge of farming.

The Idaho country had been beautiful and welcoming in that late spring of 1909. Their land lay near the small town of Gooding, in the Snake River Valley, surrounded by mountains, and was just south of the majestic Sawtooth Range. The tent which Dan had pitched as their first home became increasingly inadequate with the coming of winter, and though they now had a shanty, it was still a make-shift affair with three walls and a roof of wood, a dirt floor, and a remnant of their tent as the fourth wall and entrance way. Outside, a short distance away, Dan had built a privy and they pumped their water by hand from the well nearby.

Homesteading government land meant plodding behind a mule all day long and using simple

hand tools because farm equipment was expensive and not readily available. Wrestling crops from ground that had never been cultivated was endless and exhausting toil. Surely one of the first lessons they had learned was that there is no such thing as “free” land. The young LeFevres had barely enough money to get by, and life in this remote, nearly uninhabited land seemed harsh and cruel to a young mother accustomed to the comforts and niceties of city living.

Dan, too, yearned for life in the city where his brilliance counted for something. This place he considered to be all but devoid of human contact because his wife, who had little in the way of book learning, and virtually no sense of humor, seemed incapable of conversation on any topic save his inadequacies, their dire situation, and her worries about their daughter. If ever there had been a mismatched pair, it must have been they.

To make matters worse, Bonnie had become pregnant. This baby had been unplanned and unwanted. Dan had been harsh and bitter in his displeasure over the prospect of another mouth to feed, and now, with the doctor’s pronouncement ringing in his ears, he fervently wished that this child would die.

But how could he have known what the future held for this beleaguered infant — that his son would become an actor, radio announcer, religious cultist, Army captain, businessman, would-be politician, teacher, philosopher, and author, whose ideas would have a profound influence on tens of thousands of people?

From the day of his birth, October 13, 1911, Bonnie took it as her mission in life to heal the harm that nature had done to her infant son. For the first three months of little Robert’s life, she literally held his back together, massaging it with oil, stretching the flesh to cover his spine, and lo and behold the opening began to close.

She nursed the frail little fellow through a life-threatening bout of pneumonia and for the next few years stayed constantly by his side fearing always for his life.

Bonnie herself had undergone a traumatic illness at the age of 13, and after trying every other remedy had stopped eating meat. Miraculously she had recovered and as a result had adopted vegetarianism as a way of life, vowing that when she had children she would never serve them flesh foods. She kept her vow, and certainly little Robert thrived under her regimen, managing to outgrow his birth defect altogether and walking before he was two. When Bob was four years old he began suffering from epileptic seizures which the doctors diagnosed as “petit mal.” These seizures, which recurred only infrequently in his later years, served to further his mother’s resolve to shower him with tender loving care and in some way imbue him with her own implacable conviction that he was different and destined to greatness.

The need for additional medical care gave his parents the long desired excuse to move their family back to Minnesota. Bob became a healthy, sturdy, normal boy. He had inherited his father’s large frame, handsome, even features, along with Bonnie’s dimples and refinement.

From his earliest days, Bob seemed to have a way with the ladies. Though he was slightly on the plump side, his beautiful curly hair and dimples had the little girls all atwitter at McKinley Grade School in Minneapolis.

Seemingly born with the gift of gab, Robert charmed his way through many a tight spot, but for those times when his good looks, and apparent naivete failed him, he developed the ability to dodge bullies and stay out of fights. His mother had warned him that the slightest blow to his back could be fatal. “It takes two to fight or quarrel,” she would preach, “but one can always stop it.” At the first sign of being picked on he would drop on his back to protect his sore spot. Ordinarily that would end the conflict before it started, and that was typical of young LeFevre — “an ounce of protection was worth a pound of cure.”

His mother’s obsessive attention seemed to have a profound effect on the young LeFevre in other ways, too. Somehow she had conveyed to him the idea that he stood apart from his peers. She so often told him that he was different that he began to believe it. “They are just ordinary children, but you are superior, so you must take extra good care of yourself.” By the time Bob was a teenager, he had

absorbed her belief system. Alcohol, tobacco, and meat were taboo. Right and wrong never mixed. "I'd rather be right than President," she would repeat again and again.

Bonnie LeFevre had done her work well. Bob most assuredly was different from other boys his age. The weakness in his lower back, his vegetarianism, and his "petit mal" seizures were the least of it.

It was his high-minded ideas on right and wrong, and his love of literature that set him apart. He had an insatiable appetite for any kind of literature, especially fiction, including Shakespeare, the classical writers, and almost any swashbuckling tale, from the time of Alexander the Great to Robin Hood. Confined to his bed with a broken leg incurred when he fell from a tree at the age of twelve, Bob committed numerous lengthy poems, ballads, and even entire plays to memory. Many of these he could recall and recite perfectly to his dying day. For graduation exercises from the eighth grade, Bob was chosen for the leading role in a school production called "The Village Photographer." The presentation was such an overwhelming success that Bob decided to take up the study of drama at Minneapolis Washburn High School.

It was during his junior year in high school that he met Charlotte Hibbard. Charlotte had been brought up much as he had been, with a strict, conventional view of morals. So it was no surprise that they were attracted to one another. Charlotte was lovely, had a marvelous disposition, laughed readily, enjoyed the out-of-doors, and was an excellent student. She carried herself majestically and had beautiful, auburn-colored hair. Her face was frank and open, her mouth generous without being large. She and Bob became close friends, and by the end of their senior year, they were wildly in love. They decided that they would get married after Charlotte had finished college.

Following his high school graduation in June, 1929, Bob decided to enroll in a training program offered by Universal Producing Company of Fairfield, Iowa. For \$70, and two weeks of training, Universal guaranteed to hire him at \$30 a week or else refund his money. While Charlotte gave her blessings to the plan, LeFevre's mother was vehemently opposed to his spending his hard-earned high school savings on such a venture. Eventually, Bob was able to bring her around, and off to Iowa he went.

Universal Producing was run by five brothers named Stewart. They were home talent-show producers who trained directors to go out and stage their plays. Each director would go alone into a community and, with the help of a sponsor such as the American Legion, arrange for local talent to put on the play for a minimum of two nights. The idea was to give the locals a fun-filled evening, and out of the gross receipts from tickets, the sale of popcorn or anything else that could be sold, all the bills were paid, including the director's salary. What was left was split fifty-fifty between the sponsoring organization and the Stewart brothers. From their portion, the Stewart's paid the director another 40 percent over and above the \$30 a week salary to which he was entitled.

Bob received his first professional training in the theater from the Stewarts. During the summer of 1929, he implemented their plan and put on "Corporal Eagan" twice, once in Wausaw, Wisconsin and once in Sauk Centre, Minnesota. But he missed Charlotte so much that he quit Universal Producing and returned to Minneapolis, where he decided to give writing and directing a try on his own. Bob wrote a play called "Don't Tell" and produced it himself in Anoka, a small town outside of Minneapolis. His efforts resulted in only \$15 for almost four weeks of effort, but the experience of writing and getting his play on stage was marvelous for his ego.

Later that summer in Minneapolis he was hired as a warehouseman at Linde Air Products. He and Charlotte continued to see each other every weekend. LeFevre felt as though he had a direction and purpose in his life. He had a steady job and a girl who loved him, one whom he planned to marry. They were pledged to one another and everything was falling into place, or so they thought.

One day in January, 1930, while at work, LeFevre received a call from his mother. She was hysterical. "You must come home at once, Robert," she sobbed. "Something terrible has happened!"

Upon reaching home, LeFevre was informed by his distraught mother that Charlotte was dead. Now it was Bob's turn to despair. According to his mother, Charlotte's Dad had phoned. "He was crying. He was all broken up, but he said that Charlotte had just died at school. She just dropped over

dead.”

LeFevre ran to the phone to confirm the story with Charlotte’s family. Her father’s voice, shaken with emotion, answered, “Yes, Bob. It’s true. Charlotte is gone. Forever!”

“Who told you that?” Bob yelled. “Have you actually seen her? Do you know this first-hand or is this some kind of prank being played onus? I just saw her last night. She can’t be dead. She’s my entire life.”

Bob raced to the University of Minnesota Hospital to find out what had really happened. He dashed up the steps to the hospital, and shouted to the first person he saw, asking the way to the morgue. A shocked medical student, stunned by the stress in his voice, pointed toward a door. Bob stormed through.

On the other side of the doorway Bob found a trio of white gowned surgeons who were standing around a slab that had been pulled from a compartment in the wall.

“I’m looking for Charlotte Hibbard,” Bob demanded.

One of the white smocked figures stepped aside and indicated the prone figure on the slab before him. Bob approached for a good look.

There had been no error. Charlotte’s pale face and auburn hair were unmistakable. Except for these she was covered with a sheet. The surgeons had just completed a cerebral autopsy. A jagged bloody seam crossed her smooth brow just at the hair line.

Bob froze into immobility. His entire life seemed to have been drained away. From what seemed a great distance, he heard the surgeon talking.

“We found the problem. It was a brain tumor that nobody suspected. It’s really a shame. She was a lovely girl.”

“Often we are led to believe that government protects us from danger, that government solves our problems, and permits us to lead a happier, freer, and more secure life. But, in fact, government never does anything for us that we cannot do for ourselves, for the very best government of all is self-government, and those of us who would be free must always remember that liberty and self-government are one.” May 17, 1953

Chapter 2 – Down and Out in L.A.

Bob was wild with grief. His whole life had revolved around Charlotte. He had spent every spare moment on the job thinking about her and now that she was gone, he could hardly face returning to work. He quit his job at Linde and his mother feared that he might take his own life. Charlotte had been a regular member of the Westminster Church in downtown Minneapolis and had often requested that he join the congregation. In an effort to assuage his guilt for not having joined while she was alive, LeFevre approached Herman Sweet, the Director of Religious Education.

“Quite frankly,” he informed Mr. Sweet, “I don’t know whether I believe what is taught here in church or not. I want to join the congregation for one reason only. I think Charlotte would have approved.”

LeFevre was permitted to become a church member, and due to his experiences with Universal Producing, was soon after offered the opportunity to become director of church dramatic productions. This put him in constant contact with the church youth, and it was here that he met Ruth Margaret Tapp, known to her friends as Peggy.

Peggy had known Charlotte, but had simply accepted her death as a fact. What had happened, had happened. After a few meetings at the church, Bob and Peggy began dating. She was graceful, very feminine, down-to-earth, and filled a large void in Bob’s life.

Ethel LeFevre was aghast that her son had taken an interest in another girl within less than a year of Charlotte’s death. In an effort to lessen his interest in Peggy, his mother urged Bob to enroll at Hamline University so that he could attend drama classes there in the fall of 1931. She helped arrange a \$100 scholarship from the drama department, where he was made responsible for assisting with dramatic productions. Bob’s handsome appearance, outgoing personality, and vibrant enthusiasm earned him a great deal of attention, and he was elected President of his freshmen class.

LeFevre did not lose his interest in Peggy. She decided to become a student at Hamlin, too, and they were constantly together. Due in part to his mother’s strict moral code, and her insistence that sexual relations should be indulged in only for the purpose of having children, Bob had refrained from consummating his sexual desires with Charlotte. With Peggy, Bob decided it was to be different. Not only had he missed the pleasures of the moment with Charlotte, but now Charlotte was gone. If justice existed in this instance, he could fathom neither its rhyme nor reason.

In due course Peggy informed him that she thought she was pregnant, and a visit to the doctor confirmed her condition. Two major complications now entered their lives. First, they would have to get married, and quick. This would entail obtaining parental consent, since both he and Peggy were under age. Secondly, both of them would have to quit school. Bob’s scholarship had been used up, so it would be necessary for him to get a job. Hamline policy dictated that pregnant women could not attend, so Peggy was out as well.

Bob’s real concern was his mother. With her puritanical views about sex, it was unlikely that she would consent to Bob’s marriage. Further, Bob felt he was being a hypocrite. Not only had he broken the moral code by which his mother had raised him, he had broken his own code, for he had always insisted to his friends that he didn’t believe in premarital sex.

Bob’s mother firmly believed in shouldering personal responsibility. “He who dances must pay the piper,” was the way she expressed it. “A person must simply be responsible for what he has done.”

Thus, there was no way that she could stand against the marriage. Eventually, and much against her better judgement, she gave her consent to their marriage, which took place in mid-October, 1931.

Robert, their first son, was born in May, 1932.

Although Bob had done what he knew to be right, his life was in a shambles. His financial affairs could not have been worse. In the midst of the depression, he had given up his job at Linde, and used up his scholarship at Hamline. Equally disastrous was his mental confusion. He was lost in a sea of moral guilt. Charlotte was gone for reasons he could never comprehend, and he had violated his own moral code with the result that he had a wife and child to support and no visible means of doing so.

His father came to his rescue. Dan and Ethel had been divorced since 1922, but Dan had stayed in touch with Bob. A letter arrived from Des Moines, Iowa (where Dan had gone to live with his new wife, Alethea), containing a suggestion that Bob come to work for him at his Occidental Portrait Company. Bob had worked with his father one summer in Indiana, while he was still in high school, so he was already familiar with how the business functioned. The object was to obtain a valued family photo, which Occidental would then enlarge and place in a handsome frame. The money was made not in reproducing the photos, but in selling the frames, at which Bob's father was very successful. Bob, the "front" man, was responsible for the door-to-door solicitation, in an effort to obtain the photos to be enlarged. Although Bob had never been engaged in this part of the business, and didn't like it, he accepted the challenge.

According to the plan, Bob was to travel through Wyoming and Nebraska, eventually reaching the Pacific coast, where he thought jobs would be plentiful. Dan would follow several weeks behind, delivering enlargements and selling frames. They were scheduled to meet in Ogden, Utah, before proceeding to Los Angeles.

Business was not very good until they reached the land of the Mormons, where he found a ready market. Peggy and their son, Bobby, had accompanied Bob on his cross-country trip, and they rented a small apartment in Odgen, where they stayed for more than six weeks, waiting for Dan to catch up with them. Bob made several acquaintances among the Mormons, and when it was discovered that he had theatrical experience, he was asked to put on a production for them. During his college days, Bob had written and staged his own one-act play, entitled, "The School for Kissing," and since no royalty payments had to be made, Bob put on his own play for the Mormons. The play was well received, and Bob was encouraged in thinking that he might find theatrical work in Los Angeles. In August, he and his father settled their accounts, and Bob and his little family departed for Los Angeles in their second-hand car.

After an arduous trip across mountain and desert, Bob and family arrived in the Los Angeles basin. They managed to rent a two-bedroom furnished apartment for \$20 a month. One day on his way home from job-hunting, Bob came across a tent theater. It was operated by the Hart Players, a stock company that offered a brand new three-act play every week. Bob attended one of their productions, liked what he saw, and obtained a personal interview with Harvey Hart, the producer and general manager. Bob informed him that he was an actor "temporarily" at liberty, and would like to be called for an audition as soon as an opening occurred.

In September, 1932, the Hart's juvenile actor left, giving Bob the opportunity for which he had been hoping. He had previously auditioned, and was now accepted, even though the Harts realized he was a rank amateur. He joined the company toward the end of the month on a "share of the proceeds" basis. By then the Hart Player's tent had burned down and they were acting on live stage. Harvey Hart had arranged for his productions to precede the showing of each full length motion picture at the Alhambra Theater. There were seven actors and one manager in the stock company, and Bob was entitled to one-eighth of the gate after royalty, scenery, prop, and costume expenses had been met. The usual routine was to rehearse one play, while staging another, and trying to forget the lines from the play of the week before. The seven actors did everything from building and painting sets, to plotting lighting scenarios, and amassing props. The work was hard and demanding, but Bob loved it.

The family income just barely managed to keep up with expenses. Christmas of 1932 arrived, and attendance at the play was sparse. Bob's cut for the evening show was 13 cents. But a week later at the New Year's eve production he netted almost \$30! He went around for weeks afterward bragging that

he had earned \$30 in one evening as an actor. This was certainly his high-wage mark in the legitimate theater.

On March 10, 1933, natural disaster struck the Hart Players once again. Though Long Beach, California, was the epicenter of the violent earthquake, Pasadena, where Bob and Peggy were living, suffered massive damage as well. Peggy was badly shaken. In their small cottage, surrounded by broken dishes, the whole earth seemed to sway back and forth.

As a result of the earthquake, most of the people in the Los Angeles area became deathly frightened of buildings. They cooked, ate, and slept outside. These fears dosed every theater in Los Angeles. The owners of theaters would not open their buildings, fearing that someone might be injured in them. Although the Harts had rehearsed a new play, they were never able to stage it, and they went out of business after the earthquake. Bob's last appearance with the Hart Company was the night of the earthquake.

His father's business had gone on the rocks, too. However, Dan's brother, Roy, lived in nearby Whittier, and, by the standards of the rest of the LeFevres, he was fairly well-off. He owned 15 acres of lemon trees and was a member of the Sunkist Growers Association. Dan prevailed upon his brother to take in the rest of the family until they could get back on their feet. Shortly after they all moved in with Roy, Peggy announced she was pregnant again. Bob used his own automobile everyday looking for work, until one evening when two men showed up to repossess it. It was a terrible feeling, and he was powerless to cry out against it. Bob was now confined to using the street car lines. Within a few weeks, however, things took a turn for the better, as he managed to land a job as a classified ad writer for the *Los Angeles Times*.

With \$10 a week salary plus commissions, Bob and his family left his Uncle Roy's place and struck out on their own again. They rented a very inexpensive apartment on the third floor of a ramshackle house near St. James Park in Los Angeles. Bob set out to sell ads, but this proved less lucrative than he had hoped, because the district to which he had been assigned had few businesses in it which could afford to advertise. In addition to that, Bob's heart just wasn't in ad sales. Theater work still seemed to be in his blood, so every spare moment and all of his attention were directed toward organizing his own production of "Our American Cousin," the play that Abraham Lincoln was watching when he was assassinated. In the meantime, however, he quit his job on the *Times*. Having been warned that he must sell at least two ads the next week or lose his job, Bob decided he would rather quit than be fired. Peggy thought he was crazy, \$10 per week was better than nothing, and he hadn't been fired, only dressed down by his supervisor. Furthermore, she was convinced that the play which he had been counting on to be a financial success would be a total flop.

About a week later, Peggy came to Bob with a letter from her father, whom she had written that she wanted to return to Minneapolis to have her baby. He had sent her a check for a hundred dollars to cover *her train* fare back home, urging her to leave her husband in that god-forsaken land of earthquakes. He was too unstable, too star-struck with the theater, and simply incapable of looking after her properly. She allowed that Bob could rejoin her if and when he got enough money together to make the trip to Minneapolis. Peggy told him that otherwise the separation would be permanent, and walked out, taking Bobby with her.

Things went from bad to worse as far as Bob was concerned. His wife and child had left him, and he couldn't find a job in the theater. He was so sure that if he could be "discovered" all would go well, that he didn't even bother to look for a job outside the theater. His money ran out and he began pawning anything of value that he owned. Finally, he was down to his suitcase and the clothes on his back. He pawned the suitcase in order to eat and fell behind on the rent.

One afternoon after an unsuccessful interview at the Pasadena Community Playhouse, he relived all of the agony of his failures. "I'm no good," he said to himself out loud. "Why didn't I marry Charlotte instead of Peggy?" seemingly forgetting that she was dead. "Why did the Hart Players have to disband?" Light-headed from the skimpy meals he had been eating, Bob felt utterly confused. "Is there something mysterious going on here? Is there some kind of grudge against me?" Bob mused. "Maybe

this is God's way of saying there is nothing left on earth for me. Maybe my time has come?"

Leaving the Playhouse, Bob was inadvertently drawn toward the high bridge crossing the Arroyo Seco, known as "suicide bridge" in Pasadena.

"Maybe God wants me to die," he thought. "Everyone would be better off without me." Then he remembered a one thousand dollar insurance policy he still held with Prudential. It had a grace period, and maybe it would pay off, even if the premium was late.

Suddenly Bob noticed that he wasn't alone. There was another solitary figure on the bridge, who, like Bob, seemed to be struggling with thoughts of taking his own life. There was something about that stranger, his posture, his vacant stare, the feeling of hopelessness portrayed in his face, that made Bob realize he was a man facing a crisis similar to Bob's own.

Bob's sense of life and humor returned. He started joking with his 'suicide' companion, on how they might jump and land on the soft top of a car below. Then rather than hurting themselves, they might injure the car's occupants. Having someone to talk to relieved the tension for both of them. Bob had twenty-five cents to his name; his buddy had six cents. Together they walked off the bridge into Pasadena, where they stopped at the first coffee shop they saw. They shared their troubles and their funds, and somehow life did not seem so bleak. Bob felt good enough to return to his room that evening, the decision to take his own life having been changed by a chance meeting with another human being whose troubles paralleled his own.

That same evening, Bob's father came for a visit, and discovered how miserable his son really was. Bob did not have much respect for his father. He had been Mother's boy. Now he began to appreciate his father's realism, and his practical approach to life. Dan insisted that Bob move in with Alethea and him, and promised to make Bob an assistant on his coffee route. His father's help and firmness taught Bob that he should "get both his feet on the ground," and learn how to take care of himself. A man's pride and self-confidence were bound up in his ability to remain self-responsible and in control.

“Once a man understands the true meaning and nature of human liberty, then he assumes full stature. Once he knows, he will find a way to be free.” March 20, 1955

Chapter 3 – Return to Minneapolis and the “I Am”

November, 1933. LeFevre arrived at his in-laws’ home in Minneapolis, nearly penniless. He was unshaven, unwashed, starving, and lugging all he possessed in a blanket tied with a rope. He felt and looked like a hobo, after travelling all the way from Los Angeles. He vowed to himself that he would never let himself get into a situation like his present one again.

He had decided to re-establish his marriage with Peggy. She had given him a second son, David, and now his first priority was to find employment. Within a day of his return to Minneapolis, he had landed two jobs. The first was as a radio announcer with Station WRHM. He applied for this job his first morning in Minneapolis and was told to start work the following Monday. Apparently Bob’s “experiences” in Hollywood helped convince the station program director, Don Clayton, that his services were needed. Bob was hired to work the morning shift and started at \$14 per week. Peggy’s father could hardly believe that Bob had found paid radio work. So many people he knew went on the air without being paid. He began to have a bit of respect for Bob.

During the afternoon of his first day in Minneapolis, Bob found his second job. As the director of Physical Education for all the Twin City Schools, Peggy’s father knew the head of the Pillsbury Settlement House, which operated under the New Deal WPA (Work Projects Administration). Bob’s assignment consisted of night work, two or three evenings a week at the Pillsbury Settlement House, helping young people, and offering them guidance in starting a drama club. The pay was \$60 per month. Bob couldn’t understand how he would be making more on his part-time government job than he would be on his full-time job, but since he needed the money he didn’t question the arrangements. Although he and Peggy wanted to leave her parents’ home, they were persuaded to remain there until they had accumulated some savings. Although Bob could have used the money, he quit his job at the Settlement House after five months because he felt uncomfortable with it. It was too much like charity and too little like real work.

At WRHM, Bob had plenty to learn. He was green and inexperienced when it came to radio production. Lewis Hackman, the regular man on the morning shift, taught Bob the ropes. Lew had been a former radio man aboard ship, knew his Morse code, understood both the technical and performing sides of radio, and was a tyrant when it came to punctuality. Lew believed that a man in radio held a position of public trust.

Lew was the kind of disciplinarian that LeFevre needed. Once Bob asked him, “If, while I’m coming to work, my car breaks down - is that a valid excuse for me being late?”

“Certainly not,” and Lew added, “There is no such thing as a valid excuse when it comes to being late for the job.”

“Come on, Lew. That’s not reasonable. Things happen to cars that are often beyond anyone’s control. If the car breaks down, it’s not MY fault.”

“It’s still your fault. It’s your car and you should anticipate possible break downs and allow sufficient time to walk to work if necessary.”

LeFevre laughed. “Do you do that?”

Lew responded with a cold glare and said, “Of course.” “Is that what you expect of me?”

Lew shrugged. “You do what you have to do. But remember one thing. There are NO excuses. Human life could depend upon your announcing in the event of a disaster. This radio station exists to serve the public and the only way we can do that is to be on the air when we are supposed to be.”

As Bob gained experience on the air his performance improved. He was given raises, at first a \$2 a week cash raise and then a rent-free apartment to live in, in lieu of an actual pay increase. This allowed him and Peggy and their sons to leave his in-laws and to purchase a used car on time installments.

Eventually, the Miller brothers, who were doctors that also owned the Rosedale Hospital

Minneapolis (hence the call letters RHM), sold WRHM to Kingsley Murphy and his co-investors who owned the *Minneapolis Tribune*, and the Ritter brothers, who owned the *St. Paul Dispatch*, *Pioneer Press*. WRHM was converted to a newspaper property and took the call letters WTCN (Twin City News). This took place some time in 1935, and by then Bob had moved from his apartment to a cottage that he had purchased. The mortgage on his new home put him further in debt.

To help earn some extra money, LeFevre began to hire himself out as a special sound effects man to other radio stations. He had already built up a reputation as a sound effects engineer at WTCN. His big break came when he gave up his early morning shows. Another man stepped in and organized the "Milkman's Club" and played requests at six o'clock when the sales staff was convinced no one listened. When this announcer was fired, LeFevre was put back in his earlier slot and told to continue the "Milkman's Club." Jim Kelly was Bob's engineer and the two of them started ad libbing on the air. LeFevre began to quip with people who called in requests and Kelly often put their conversations on the air. It was one of the earliest 'talk' shows.

Jim was truly funny himself. His native Irish wit coupled with Bob's imagination did the trick. The "Milkman's Club" at six A.M. on a mere thousand watt station began to achieve ratings. One day LeFevre announced that he was doing nothing more than peddling milk, the milk of human kindness. Then someone phoned up to ask about the Club's cow. LeFevre came up with the appropriate sound effect, including the sound of milk foaming into a bucket.

Did the cow have a name? She was promptly called Lulu Belle. Several weeks later she had a calf. LeFevre explained that WTCN was blessed by having "a little bull" on the air. The show was now made. His fan mail soared. The sales department was still skeptical. How could it prove that LeFevre really had listeners at six in the morning? It needed to demonstrate that to sponsors to whom it was trying to sell spot ads.

LeFevre suggested that over the air, he could personally ask each listener to send in a cap from a bottle of milk. If some listeners sent more than one, so much the better. The concept was explained on the air and the bottle tops poured in. During a one week test period, more than 60,000 tops were received. LeFevre received publicity in the local papers and had his picture taken sitting in a heap of bottle tops which came up nearly to his shoulders. Bob was at the peak of his radio career. In his mid-twenties, he was slim and attractive and stood nearly six feet tall. Handsome features marked his countenance. Wavy hair, a broad smile, and sparkling blue eyes were his trademarks.

For the next two or three years, LeFevre was the station's success story. He became known as "Happy Bob." Yet, in reviewing his situation, Bob suddenly became appalled. Was this all there was to life? He spent most of his waking hours in the studio or on special "talent" airings. This separated him from Peggy and the boys. What could the future hold for him if this was success? Perhaps his coworkers were right? Maybe he was too conventional.

Bob decided to approach Don Clayton about his problem. Perhaps Clayton would suggest that he find another job and that he would be happier there. That appointment with Clayton was a turning point in Bob's life. After discussing Bob's work at the station, Clayton finally rose from his desk, walked around Bob, and closed the door to his office. Clayton wanted total privacy.

"I'm beginning to wonder if you're ready for this." "For what?" LeFevre wanted to know.

After a long pause, Clayton searched his face and finally asked, "Do you go to church?"

LeFevre smiled. "Sure, I accompany Peggy to Westminster when I can. At the time of Charlotte's death I got pretty interested, but whenever I asked the minister about her death, I was told that no one understood. I guess I don't have the necessary faith since I don't go along with the Virgin birth, or miracles, or that sort of thing. And I don't think a decent God who had all kinds of power would have allowed Charlotte to die. It just doesn't make sense," Bob said, stirring many old memories.

"That's the trouble with most organized religions," Don said. "They are content with symbols and forms. Ceremony. Music. But just not the kinds of things that provide knowledge of spiritual verities."

"Are you suggesting that I go to church more often?"

“No, Bob, but there is such a thing as spiritual truth. Maybe this is what you are really asking me about when you ask me if ‘this’ is all there is to life. There is more. A great deal more. Did you ever hear of Theosophy?” Don asked. “We have a small group that meets here in town every couple of weeks. We meet in a private house where a woman who is an advanced student lives. The Theosophical movement was started by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and others who were able to contact a member of the Great Brotherhood. She and a man named Leadbeater wrote down some of the teachings of the Masters. If you come to some of the meetings, you’ll begin to learn what it’s all about.”

Bob nodded his head and Don wrote down the time and address of the next meeting on a piece of paper and handed it to him.

For some time, Bob faithfully attended the meetings conducted by a branch of the Minneapolis Theosophical Society. Peggy went with him once or twice, but neither of them seemed to get anything significant out of it. The Theosophists believed in reincarnation. They claimed they were in touch with the Masters. Around every human form was supposed to be a “karmic body” which comprised all the emotions and thoughts of an individual in his or her prior lives. The ultimate law of karma explained everything, even Charlotte’s unexplainable death. Charlotte had apparently done something in a prior life which demanded that she pay for it in this life. But to Bob, the Theosophist position seemed no more firmly anchored than that of the church doctrine taught at Westminster.

Meanwhile Bob’s chores at WTCN became increasingly monotonous. His job attitude and spontaneity on the air were affected. One day Don Clayton called him into his office, and Bob admitted that he had doubts about reincarnation, the Masters and Theosophy in general.

After dosing the door, Don said, “I gather that you aren’t too impressed with the teachings of the Masters.”

Bob nodded in agreement. “Don, I’ve honestly tried to understand, but it seems hopeless.”

They discussed a few theological points, while Don was studying Bob’s face. “It’s just possible,” Don confided in a low voice, “that you are one of the new dispensation.”

“What does that mean?”

“Bob, a new pair of messengers have recently made their appearance. Guy and Edna Ballard. They tell us they are Messengers from the Masters and that they bring a new teaching.

“I’m not totally sure about them. Time alone will tell the truth about whether or not they are phonies. But meanwhile, they are having quite an impact. The Ballards are travelling about the country, drawing huge crowds, everywhere they go. They claim to be the Messengers of Saint Germain.”

Don had Bob’s full attention now.

Don took a sheet of paper and drew what appeared to be a bell jar. “The Ballards say that they can assist anyone in redeeming his or her karmic debt. They are teaching people how to surround themselves with a barrier of light rays to ward off negative projections from others. The bell jar in my drawing indicates this shield. Think of it as a glass milk bottle with the individual standing inside of the bottle. A great deal of what they say makes sense, but a little knowledge can be a very dangerous thing.”

“Who is Saint Germain?” Bob asked.

“He is Master of the Seventh Ray. The Ballards are saying that Jesus is the Master of the Sixth Ray. Everything they say doesn’t agree totally with earlier Theosophic reports. The Ballards could be wrong. But then, to be fair, so could the Theosophists. Does the Ballard message intrigue you, Bob? Want to find out more?”

“I sure do,” was the eager reply.

“Very well. The Ballards have written several books and I am sure you can get them at the library. Try to find one called *Unveiled Mysteries*. The author is Godfre Ray King, Guy Ballard’s pen name.” Ballard had written a book that was a cross between Theosophy and science fiction. In the book, he said that he had been spending time in northern California, near Mount Shasta. There he met a handsome stranger who gave him a drink of a special elixir. Thanks to the amazing properties of this fluid, Ballard began having an incredible series of adventures accompanied by this stranger. The stranger turned out to be the Master, Saint Germain.

Saint Germain would arrive every night at Ballard's hotel and the two of them in their "finer" bodies would travel all over the world. At each destination Saint Germain would relate what had transpired in earlier cultures. He also explained that the average person made little or no attempt to control his thoughts. They "ran around like a little stray dog" and the consequence was that the great forces which could bring a person happiness, beauty, wealth, and all the good things in life, lay dormant and untapped. However, if a person made a positive effort and got his mind under his own control, then it could and would perform what others assumed to be miracles. Actually, as Saint Germain explained it, there were no miracles. It was just that mankind was as yet ignorant of many great natural laws.

The most meaningful thing about the book was that Ballard did not ask the reader to take it on faith. So Bob set about proving the truth or falsity of Ballard's story for himself. Ballard called for concentrated doses of meditation, or what amounted to self-hypnosis, and Bob took a few minutes each day to practice this. Then one day something happened which he could not explain.

He was in Studio B at WTCN, standing next to the grand piano. The recordings he had played on his shift were stacked on top of the piano. His relief announcer was in the booth giving a commercial. Suddenly Bob had a feeling of rising to a great height within himself. A voice spoke. Only two words were spoken. "I Am." That was all. Instantly, the studio was filled with the aroma of fresh roses. At the same moment, Bob heard a series of clicks in his mind and with each click a question about ultimate reality that had baffled him, appeared answered. In that instant every doubt and fear that he harbored vanished.

"I Am," was the answer.

John Carlyle, a continuity writer, came into the studio. He paused, and then sniffed the air. "Hey. That's some perfume. Were you making time with some broad?"

Rather than being angered, Bob was speechless. There had been a "Presence" in the studio. He had felt it there in the studio; he had heard the voice.

That night at home, Peggy suspected that Bob had had a date. The perfume of roses so permeated Bob's scalp that it lingered in his hair for more than a week, despite daily showers and hair rinses. He tried to explain to Peggy what had happened to him. All he could do was attribute it to having followed Ballard's suggestions. After all, the book had said that if he followed the instructions, he would in his own experience learn that every word was true. Bob was elated with his success.

He confided to Don Clayton. "You are blessed," Don had told him. "It's real to you and I know you are telling the truth." Then he smiled. "I didn't use the term 'I Am' to you. But that is the term the Ballards are using. They call it the 'I Am' movement or the Teachings of the 'I Am'."

According to the Ballards, Saint Germain was an "Ascended Master" who was working with them to save America. The key to the whole process was the concept of "I Am." As the Ballards explained it, "I Am" was actually the name of God, and for evidence they cited the story of the burning bush in the Bible. ("And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM." Exodus 3:14) And even Jesus had said, "I Am' the son of God." The Ballards taught that the real meaning of "I Am" was that each person is in control of his or her self; each human being was the son or daughter of God. This God was a "Presence" physically located just above each person's body and was knowable to anyone who was able to exercise sufficient mastery and self-control. This entailed visualizing his "Presence" which in turn enabled him to harness the "power of the universe" for "right" purposes.

The Ballards believed that one's "Presence" could be called upon now to consume the karmic debts created by one's past lifetimes, thus ridding oneself of all past evils. To succeed in doing this, the Ballards held each person accountable to a strict code of behavior. One must be physically clean by washing every day. Tobacco, drugs, alcohol, and even coffee and tea were on the prohibited list. All flesh foods were proscribed because, the Ballards claimed, meat obscured a person's spiritual insights by engendering a chemical which entered the brain and dulled the senses.

The Ballards held two other positions with which Bob could readily associate. First was their view of sex. Under the "I Am" teaching, the only purpose of sex was that of procreation. The second was their view of patriotism. According to the Ballards, Saint Germain had come to their assistance

because America was in the midst of a vast conspiracy spear-headed by the communists.

Suddenly Bob's upbringing and his mother's influence over him were vindicated. Unknowingly, her own philosophy had made him an "advanced" "I Am" student. She had always counseled abstinence in sexual matters and never served him meat. She had even gone so far as to exact a promise from him that he would never eat meat when he was away from home (and the once or twice that he tried he was always nauseated by it). He had never taken a drink and had only made one abortive attempt to smoke cigarettes. Thus encouraged to find himself in like company, Bob wrote the Ballards to find out if it was possible to meet them in person, and if there was some center in the Twin City area where he could keep himself informed about their activities and teachings.

The Ballard's replied that they would be touring the country and holding classes in major cities. They would be in Detroit sometime during the summer of 1937, holding a ten day "class" and Bob was certainly invited to attend. Meanwhile, there was a study center in Minneapolis and one of the "Assistant Messengers" (selected by the Ballards, but approved by Saint Germain) would be visiting it soon.

Later that summer, Bob and Peggy travelled to Detroit and stayed for two days to listen to the Ballards. The presentation was spectacular. The stage was covered with a white ground cloth. Three chairs were set up; two for the Ballards, and the third for Saint Germain, who sometimes made an invisible appearance. No one ever saw him except the Ballards, but they would agree that he was present. On one side of the stage was a huge painting of Jesus in a splendid gold frame displayed on an easel. On the other side of the stage was a portrait of Saint Germain. In the center of the stage, hanging above his chair was another huge painting, referred to as "the chart." This portrayed a human form standing on a block of white light. The human was enveloped in an aura of white radiance that poured down from another figure, high above the first. This upper figure represented the 'Presence.'

The Ballards were show people, if nothing else. The stage was brightly lit. There was organ music and singing. Mr. and Mrs. Ballard were announced by a man in a spotless white suit. Guy appeared in an immaculate white tuxedo. He stood slightly over six feet tall, had an intelligent face, large nose, piercing blue eyes and dignified-looking white hair. Edna wore a flowing robe of pink chiffon. She was lovely. Her hair was golden, her face symmetrical and pale, and her actions graceful and natural. They entered to a standing ovation, which must have lasted at least five minutes. But their presence in the auditorium brought something more than applause. Bob and Peggy looked at each other. There was a feeling of love, worship, adoration, something almost tangible in the air. Even Peggy, who had not found much of anything in the "I Am" teachings, was impressed by their appearance on stage.

Driving back from Detroit, Bob and Peggy had a long talk about what they had seen and heard. Peggy had been favorably impressed. She admitted she didn't understand it all, but at least she understood why Bob was so elated. Everything now made sense to him. He was no longer bored and had changed his attitude about life and work. He was happy to be alive and to be part of the magic "Presence" which the Ballards described. His experience in Studio B at the radio station had made the Ballards' teachings real to him.

Shortly after the trip to Detroit, Bob had occasion to visit his mother. She had sold her home in South Minneapolis and was working as a practical nurse. Bob told her all about the "I Am." She said it was too extreme for her to comprehend, but her final remark as Bob embraced her was: "I must say, Robert, that the Ballards have done wonders for you. For that I am grateful. But please be careful. It sounds too good to be true."

Bob smiled back in a superior manner. He had heard these comments before. "Mother, most of the people I talk to about the 'I Am' respond the same way. Most people believe in evil, but when something good comes along every doubt is awakened. It's no wonder so many people have so many problems. They believe in their problems. They create them.

"Each of us lives in a world of his own making. And I've had a terrible world to live in, a world that I made that way. But now I can see my way out of it. And, boy, am I going to get out and stay out. And I hope and pray that one day you will rise above your doubts and fears and do it, too."

Bob's homelife and work, now took second place behind his interest in the "I Am." When Bob

wrote to the Ballards to ask for permission to start a reading room in St. Paul, he was surprised to receive an invitation to visit with them personally in Kansas City. They would be there in a few weeks giving another ten day "class."

Bob arranged his trip to Kansas City and was met by Pat Crouse, Mr. Ballard's secretary. When they reached the theater where classes were being held, Bob was ushered backstage. There from stage left, and out of sight of the audience, he was able to observe the Ballards at work. Again, they exhibited a tremendous stage presence and Bob came as near to the adoration of two human beings as he ever came in his life. When their class was over, Mama and Daddy Ballard invited Bob to have a seat with them and proceeded to give him permission to open a reading room. However, they explained to Bob that they could not assist him financially. Each reading room had to support itself through voluntary contributions and sales of literature.

Back in Minneapolis, Bob tried to locate a suitable site for the reading room. He wanted something impressive, something that would attract people. Finally Bob located a 15 room mansion on River Drive that would be perfect. The asking price was \$15,000, but six lots were included, and there were eight bedrooms, four baths, a solarium, a full basement, kitchen, attic, and sitting room which could be used for setting out literature and holding meetings. Peggy and Bob toured the property with several of Bob's converts to the "I Am" movement. They all agreed that it would be ideal, provided they could come up with the required downpayment of \$1,500. They would all share the expense of the mortgage by living there and paying rent.

Bob spoke to the owner of the building and said that neither he nor his supporters had \$1500 cash, but that he did have that much equity in his own home. He was willing to make the equity in his home the downpayment on the mansion. Bob was certain the monthly mortgage payments could be met by renting out the rooms. He and Peggy and their two boys would take the largest suite for \$160 a month. The deal was accepted and the St. Paul "I Am" Reading Room was established in early 1938. Bob's early ambition was fulfilled. He had attracted a loyal group of people around him. Peggy did much of the house work with the "guests" helping. Bob spent his days at the radio studio and his nights at the reading room.

It was during this time that he experienced two other unexplainable events in Studio B. One day he performed an incredible feat by sitting down in Studio B and typing out (in one setting) a twenty page, single spaced, dramatic poem, entitled "Neath the Forest Oak." Don Clayton liked the poem well enough to have it broadcast. Immediately after the broadcast, the clock in Studio B went wild. The hands jumped from place to place and a high-pitched metallic scream came from it for nearly a minute. Then it stopped and resumed its normal function.

No one on the staff had ever experienced anything as erratic as that before. They were dumbfounded, and Bob certainly couldn't explain it. These events shook him to the roots of his soul.

“It is only through individual effort that the world we live in can improve. . We arrive individually on this troubled sphere. We depart it individually. And we are never more nor less than just one. Therefore each of us must undertake to be the very best ONE that we have within ourselves to become, regardless of all others.” July 1,1955

Chapter 4 – The Union Planned Strike and Planned Murder

In the fall of 1937, a man Bob had never seen came slouching into the studio. He looked like a vagabond, but he had an aggressive attitude as he confronted each station employee in turn. The man was an organizing agent for the Teamsters and was informing the members of the radio staff that an organizational meeting was to be held the following Tuesday night at union headquarters.

The next day, one of the announcers approached Bob and told him he wanted a dollar. “We’re all going down to Teamster headquarters for the meeting next week. You have to pay a dollar to make an application. The union wants everyone there.”

After asking around, Bob discovered that he and a new trainee, named Spencer, were the only holdouts. After several more urgings from their fellow workers they finally gave in and paid their dollar so they could attend.

In 1937, the Teamsters were still part of the American Federation of Labor, Minneapolis Local 544 had a notorious reputation for violence. Several years before, members of the local had engaged in a two day armed battle against the police, employers, and nonunion employees in the warehouse district of Minneapolis. Both Bob and Spencer agreed that they wanted as little to do with this union as possible.

The union meeting hall was in an abandoned warehouse in downtown Minneapolis. The gist of the union’s message was that the bosses didn’t give a hoot about the employees and would only pay more in wages if they were pressured by the union. When the harangue was over, Bob asked permission to ask some questions. “If pay was by seniority, how were men who had special radio skills and talents to be paid? For example, I’m the man with the longest record of service on the production staff, but others like Hal and Carlyle have far better voices or writing skills. Am I entitled to more pay just because I have been on the job longer than they have?”

The union man looked anxiously around the room. He could see that LeFevre had scored some points. He glared back at LeFevre and belched out, “I knew you was a trouble maker, the moment I met you.”

“I’m not making trouble. You wanted questions and I have some more. You told us about all the benefits we get from the union, but what is it going to cost us?”

“That’s the best part,” the rep said. “Because you guys have never had a chance before, we are giving you a special deal. There’s a \$ 25.00 initiation fee. But that’s a one-time shot. After that, all you pay is \$ 8.00 a month.”

LeFevre figured it up. With ten new members the Union would take in \$ 80 a month or nearly a \$1000 a year. “Where does that much money go?” LeFevre wanted to know.

Bob heard footsteps behind him. It was the rep’s bouncer, a big-chested hunk of a man who had advanced right up behind him. “Not yet,” the union rep said and the big goon backed away.

“I’ve heard and seen all I need to know,” Bob finally stated. “The rest of you can do as you please. But I’m not joining the union.”

“That goes for me, too,” Spencer said and the two of them got up and headed for the door. As soon as they were outside, both breathed a sigh of relief.

“Oh, man! Was I scared,” admitted Spencer. “I thought that big bruiser had it in for you. What are we going to do?”

“Do?” Bob asked. “I’m not going to do anything. Most particularly, I’m not going to join the union.”

Bob believed that his decision not to join the union was correct. The idea of using open violence against his employer was repugnant. The radio station hadn't approached him asking him to come to work. Rather, he had approached the management asking for a job and it had been provided. Bob simply found it impossible to become angry at people who had voluntarily agreed to pay him what he had voluntarily agreed to accept. The fact that they were richer or poorer made little difference, so long as they met their voluntarily assumed obligations.

Bob wondered if the Ballards approved of his refusal to join the union. He wrote a letter to Daddy and Mama Ballard to find out if he had done right according to the Masters.

In response, Guy Ballard wrote to Bob, explaining that people who owned property had a right to do with it as they pleased. The property was theirs. Either they earned it, bought it, or received it as inheritance. But he recognized that property owners did not always make the wisest use of their property. Some of them were downright foolish in the way they handled their property. No one, however, had the right to correct their shortcomings by force. If one didn't like one's employment, either the wages or the working conditions, one always had the right to resign and seek work elsewhere. That's what was meant by being in control of one's self. One was never justified in physically harming another human being. To be doubly sure of his position, Ballard encouraged Bob to consult his own "God-Presence." If a person did the right thing, the voice of his "Presence" would sing to him and bring him joy. If he were in error there would be feelings of remorse and disappointment. "Listen to the voice of your 'Presence,' Bobby Boy," he wrote, "and you cannot ever take your footsteps far from the pathway of light."

The interest in the union seemed to die down after this incident. However, a few weeks later at the studio, Bob was approached again, this time about joining the Newspaper Guild. Bob explained that he wasn't interested in joining any union. He was opposed to them on principle. Life seemed to return to normal at the radio station after this conversation.

Several days later, the station manager, Swanee Hagman, came into the announcer's booth. Bob was surprised to see him, for ordinarily he had little contact with the top brass. His orders always came from Don Clayton. Hagman explained that a strike had been scheduled by the Guild at 6:00 o'clock that very evening, and he was surprised to learn that LeFevre knew nothing about the Guild or the projected strike. He had thought that LeFevre had joined the Guild and voted in favor of the strike. LeFevre explained that he had never even attended any of the Guild meetings.

The union was after more than just an increase in wages. The Guild leadership knew that as of 1935, the Federal Communications Commission had become responsible for issuing broadcasting licenses to all radio stations. Whenever a station went off the air for an unscheduled break, it had to present the FCC with an explanation. Otherwise the station could lose its license.

The Guild leadership knew all of this. They also knew that Kingsley Murphy, half-owner of WTCN, was out of the country. They refused to wait two weeks for his return to negotiate a contract. The union wanted to use WTCN as a test case to find out what the FCC would do if a station stopped broadcasting because of a strike.

As Hagman explained to Bob, "Think of the power that they would hold over every radio station in the country. All the Guild would have to do is threaten, and station management would shake in its boots."

Bob stared back at him in disbelief. "What do you want me to do, Swanee?"

"Keep the station on the air. Whatever it takes. But I am not asking you to risk your life. I know that the union can play rough. Things could get dangerous."

"I'm not worried about that," Bob responded. "All I want to do is what is right. I think it would be wrong to put this station off the air, so I'll keep it on. The way I see it, it's like this. When I came to work, the management played fair with me. Every time they said something, they kept their word."

"You're a brave man, Bob. I don't think I'd have quite as much nerve as you."

"Bravery has nothing to do with it, Swanee. It's what's right that matters. I'm on duty till I'm relieved."

Hagman nodded in a sign of thanks and shook Bob's hand. Bob's relief man showed up that night, so Bob figured that the strike had been called off.

Two days later, Hagman called Bob to his office and informed him that the strike was back on. "For tonight, they say. They'll finish at midnight. The station will be off the air tomorrow."

The following day, Bob awoke extra early and drove down to the radio station. He planned to man the station himself, with assistance from one of the other executives, John Shannon, at the transmitter. The broadcasting went smoothly, except that he had no engineer. When he checked the transmitter, Shannon assured him that he had cranked up the equipment.

Later that afternoon Hagman came in to warn him that he had heard of a plan to beat him up when he left the station at midnight. The union now realized that LeFevre could and would handle the 18 hours of broadcasting for the first day of the strike. Rather than risk the drive home, Bob decided to spend the night at the station. The next day, he repeated the same routine. Meals were sent up regularly. During this time he also followed his "I Am" procedures. He made calls to his "Presence" and he tried to control his emotions and concentrate on his job, despite the pickets below.

This went on for a third day. Most callers supported the station and were surprised that it had stayed on the air as long as it had. The fourth day was incredibly hot. All the windows were open when storm clouds began to darken the northwestern sky. All of a sudden, the light on the direct line from the transmitter began flashing. Shannon's voice had lost all of its earlier lightheartedness. "Bob, the Union has sent a deputation up here and advised me that unless I pull the switch and shut down the transmitter in 10 minutes, they're going to break in the door and smash the equipment."

Bob wondered what he could do. What had the Ballards always said? The "Presence" could perform miracles, couldn't it? All one had to do was be sincere and make maximum application. And, of course, be pure in purpose. So Bob meditated during the next few minutes while a record was playing.

Again, the blinking signal from Shannon's phone. "Are we off the air, John?"

"No. We're still on. And we're going to stay on. I had made up my mind that I was going to pull the main switch when the first hand reached the door. I figured I could at least wait till then.

"I could see everything. They got about half-way to me. And then the rain came! My God, it came down in buckets. I had my hand on the switch. Just then there was a tremendous bolt of lightning. The tower must have attracted it. It plowed a furrow into the ground right where they were standing. Scared the hell out of them, and me too.

"You should have seen those goons turn and run. They jumped into their truck and drove off as fast as they could. Can you believe they're gone?"

"Sure, I can, John. I knew it would be wrong to go off the air. I believe that people who are doing the right thing have friends that will help them sometimes."

There was silence on the end of John's line.

"I've heard some strange things about you, Bob. Did you have anything to do with it?"

LeFevre laughed. "You know better than that, John. You're an engineer. No, I was making some calls. Praying, you'd call it. I knew both of us were doing the right thing. That's all did."

John paused again. "Bob, I want to thank you for making me keep the station on the air."

"I didn't make you do anything. You did what was right and that's all anyone can do."

On the sixth day, Hagman reappeared on the 12th floor to inform Bob that Kingsley Murphy had been located. "We've just finished work on a union contract and a relief man is on the way, Bob.

"You did it. You held the whole Newspaper Guild at bay. Everyone of us is grateful and Kingsley wanted me to thank you specially on his behalf.

"How much longer do you think you could have held out?"

Bob thought a minute and then replied. "I have no idea. Except for the tension there's been nothing unusual. I suspect I could go on for weeks if necessary. It's not that tough."

The days following the strike were joyless ones. Bob was cold-shouldered by the staff. Gradually though, after a few weeks, some of them began softening. The pressure was slowly easing and it seemed as though Bob's good-natured personality was winning them back as friends. At least that was what Bob

thought until the “Lullabye Lady” came to see him. She was not a station employee and had remained friendly to him during the strike. She had her own show every evening, designed to appeal to younger children at bedtime. She was distraught. Her face was pale and drawn. Bob offered her a chair in the tiny broadcast booth.

“What is it?” he questioned.

“They’re going to kill you.” It was a flat, quiet statement. “I listened to the whole thing. I was at the restaurant. I go there sometimes to plan my show. It has booths with high backs and I can be alone there. I must have fallen asleep and no one realized I was there.”

The “Lullabye Lady” had overheard a plot to murder Bob. Several of the union men on the staff had been following him for days. They would catch him one morning, as he left for work and dump his car into the Mississippi, so that his death would appear to be accidental.

There was no question about it, “Lullabye Lady” was telling the truth. They were out to get him for refusing to go on strike. Bob had thought he had been breaking the ice in the studio atmosphere. That had all been a sham. They had been just trying to make him think they were warming up to him in order to get his defenses down.

Bob assured “Lullabye Lady” that he would make plans to take care of himself the following morning. He was not particularly unnerved by this set of events. He had accepted the concept of the “Presence” of the “I Am” and he had confidence that it would look out for him. He repeated “Lullabye Lady’s” story to Peggy and his friends at the “T Am” reading room and asked them to make calls that night for his protection and the triumph of what was right.

The practical part of his plan was to get up an hour early in order to dodge his enemies. He would leave at 3:30 a.m. instead of 4:30 a.m., as they expected.

When Bob awoke the following morning, he peeked outside and saw a black sedan parked at the curb, some distance away. He whispered to Peggy, ‘Don’t turn on any lights. I’ll sneak out the back door and take the car through the orchard, so they won’t see me. It’ll work. Have faith in the ‘Presence’.’”

That is exactly how Bob eluded his pursuers. When he reached the street at the end of the orchard, he bounced off the curb and took off for the station. So far as he could see in his rear view mirror there was no one after him. He made his way to the radio station and managed to ensconce himself in the 12th floor offices well before the time that he usually left for work. All he could presume was that the black sedan was still parked at the curb waiting for him to leave his home.

Around 5:45 a.m. he went to the window and peered out. Just then the black sedan appeared. Six men got out, and began straining their eyes towards the 12th floor to see if LeFevre had actually made it to work. At a few minutes before 6 o’clock, he observed them huddled around their car radio. It was time for him to go on the air with his cheery “Milkman’s Club” greeting. As soon as he could, he raced to the window to see their reactions. He saw them looking up his way and in the still morning air he could clearly hear their curses.

Bob received no other threats on his life, but Peggy did receive threatening calls at home, one of them entailing the kidnapping of their boys. She was frightened enough to call the police, and for three months the children went to and from school with a police escort. Phone calls came in the middle of the night at the Reading Room, and obscene calls were directed to Bob at the station. Bob learned what it was to be a target.

Finally, one day as he was walking through Studio Bon his way out of the station, two mean-looking men burst into the office. They grabbed Bob, one on either side and one of them growled at him, “We’ve got you, you son of a bitch. We’re gonna get you outside and beat the hell out of you.”

They were certainly powerful enough to have done it. Never before had Bob been in physical danger like this. What could he do? Automatically, he thought of his “I Am” training. The Ballards had always taught that criminals were not brave people. If one would make his “call to the Presence” and follow the directions that “came from the Presence” the criminals could be overcome.

As the men started to man-handle Bob, literally carrying him towards the elevator, he did the first thing that came into his mind, yelling out at the top of his lungs, “Feather!”

The men released him at once, backing off and not knowing what to make of this turn of events.

“Christ, he’s flipped out!” one of the two said.

“My God, let’s get out of here,” responded the other.

Jabbing the button for the elevator, which didn’t respond quickly enough, they threw terrified looks over their shoulders and took off down the stairs. A few days later, toward the end of 1938, Bob was working the afternoon shift when the switchboard operator informed him there was a man from the Newspaper Guild to see him. She wanted to know if she should call the police.

“Certainly not,” Bob said, “I’ll handle him.”

A man Bob had never seen before came into the studio. Bob stepped out of the announce booth, fearing there might be some attempt to sabotage the delicate equipment or corner him in the small confines of the booth. The man Bob saw was well-dressed and obviously not one of the union’s goons. The Guild rep approached Bob, eyed him up and down, and then said, “So you’re Bob LeFevre.”

“Right,” Bob said. “Who are you and what do you want? After identifying himself, the man from the Guild answered, “I just came up here to take a look at you.”

“Okay. Take a good look. It’s free,” Bob replied.

“Don’t get fresh with me, Punk.”

“Then don’t get fresh with me,” Bob snarled.

“Okay,” he said after a moment. “You’ve won. This time. We’re calling off the dogs. You’re safe from us from now on, so long as you stay here at WTCN.

“We won’t interfere. There’ll be no more threats. Nothing. But let me warn you. If you ever leave here, all bets are off. You are being black-balled from coast to coast. You will never work in radio again.”

“Ho ho ho. ... And you know what I think of you and all your threats!”

The union man shook his head. “I have to admit you’re a surprise. You’re so damn young! But don’t think we’re letting you off on that account. If you leave here and ever stick your head up again, we’ll cut it off. Got it?”

With that, the stranger turned on his heel and walked away.

“Success must be measured in terms of eternal verities. And money and applause are both temporary things, of no lasting merit or importance. To achieve truly, one must be aware of the ages. One must so govern his thoughts and actions that he lives in terms of truth, rather than in terms of popular acceptability.” November 3, 1955

Chapter 5 – A Stint With the Ballards

Bob’s fascination with the Ballards and their “I Am” teachings had made him a religious zealot. The Ballards could do no wrong. In January, 1939, he jumped at the chance to drive to Los Angeles with another couple from the Reading Room in order to hear the Ballards give part of their 17 day class at the Shrine Auditorium. Peggy was not interested in accompanying him, and although she remained dutiful and loyal to him, she had little real personal dedication to the “I Am.”

Bob wanted to draw as close as possible to the Ballards, hoping that some of their saintliness would attach to him. If so, then one day he, too, might be able to see Saint Germain, as they did. Bob’s driving goal was to become so completely trustworthy that he might reach the status of an “Accredited Messenger.” A secondary goal was to get the Ballards to come to Minneapolis to conduct one of their classes. While Bob was in Los Angeles, he had an opportunity to ask Daddy Ballard about this. All Daddy could say was that he should “make his calls” and “maybe a way would open.” Then he reminded Bob that as Messengers, he and Edna only went where Saint Germain directed them to go.

When Bob returned to Minneapolis, he renewed his efforts to get the Ballards to come to his home town. He enlisted his students at the Reading Room and asked them to make more “calls.” Bob also received permission from the Ballards to open up a second reading room. He maintained the one in St. Paul, where he, his family, and followers lived. The second one was in downtown Minneapolis, in the Wesley Temple Building, where WTCN had their offices and studios.

Finally word came in the spring of 1939. The Ballards would come to Minneapolis that summer. It was up to Bob to make all the arrangements, including making reservations, and paying for a lecture hall and first-class hotel accommodations for the Ballards. Where was this money to come from?

The only answer provided by the “I Am” teaching was that when one wanted money, one applied to the “Presence.” At the various classes Bob had attended, the theme of money was always handled the same way. Admission to all Ballard sessions was free, but “Love Gifts” were solicited. The Ballards felt that each person was in charge of his own resources and would best know how to use them. Bob had followed this practice at his reading room in St. Paul, but it seemed there were never enough “Love Gifts.” That was one of the reasons why his whole paycheck went to support the reading room. The Ballard approach to money was the most discrete and least pressurized of any religious group Bob had ever seen. The general impression that the Ballards gave out was that they had all the money they needed, and so would everyone else if they did the “right” things.

It was at this time that Bob had another strange experience. He had been printing announcements of the upcoming Ballard class on an old letterpress that he used for such purposes. Suddenly, his arm slipped and he crushed almost all of his hand in the press rollers. But he was so involved in what he was doing, that he simply called upon his “Presence” to heal the hand, and bandaged it in some rags he had laying nearby. By the time he got to a doctor several days later, the injury had healed so well that the doctor thought it was three weeks old, rather than three days old. It was simply impossible to explain how this rapid healing had taken place.

By the time the Ballards’ classes were over, it was obvious that they were a money loser. Although the Ballards had expected the local Reading Rooms to cover all their expenses, when Bob informed them that this couldn’t be done, they paid all the outstanding bills without complaint.

If Bob had been less naive, he might have become suspicious of the maneuverings of the Ballards. As it was, he wondered why he had been expected to cover all their expenses, if they were so well-off. Secondly, there was no good explanation for the dismissal of Jim Rogers, their announcer. He had apparently had an affair with the Ballard’s organist, while at the same time living with his wife. Bob

reasoned that either the all-knowing Saint Germain had permitted Jim's affair, or had known nothing about it. Either Saint Germain was not all-knowing or else he permitted unheard of evils to exist among the people on the Ballard staff. To say that "a black magician had projected his way onto the Ballard staff" was no reasonable explanation at all. Yet that is precisely how the Ballards explained the incident.

Finally, Bob began hearing rumors that the Ballards refused to return to Chicago to have classes because Guy Ballard had once been involved in a stock scheme known as "The Lake of Gold." Ballard feared that should he ever return to the Windy City, he would be served with legal papers. Nevertheless, the Ballards, announced that their next group of classes would be held in Chicago. Bob had personally heard Mama Ballard make calls to "blast" the vicious forces in Chicago, and to make use of "blue lightning" and the "blue flame" to annihilate the black magicians so that attacks against the Messengers would "cease and desist" at once.

Bob travelled to Chicago in hopes that he would be chosen to replace Jim Rogers. His arrival was planned so that he could volunteer for any task that might need doing for the Ballards. He was requested to act as one of the guards when Daddy started his autograph session in the foyer of the Civic Opera House.

Bob was flabbergasted when he saw Daddy Ballard being served a summons to court. (The Ballard attorney had mistakenly advised Daddy that the statute of limitations had expired.) Why didn't the Masters respond to the calls for "protection?"

The press had a field day taking pictures and generally showing Daddy Ballard up as a fake.

In order for him to be back in Minneapolis in time for his Sunday morning radio show, Bob and his companions had to leave Chicago that same evening. Driving westward through Wisconsin, Bob became fearful of falling asleep at the wheel. The experience in Chicago had emotionally and physically drained him. Despite his fears, he did fall into some sort of hypnotic trance, and drove for some twenty miles. In his book, *I Am America's Destiny*, which he wrote several years later, Bob described this experience by saying that his "Higher Mental Body" had taken over and directed everything while he was "asleep."

Within a few days of his return from Chicago, Bob became seriously ill and bed-ridden. He viewed his illness as some sort of evil "projection." He thought that perhaps it was the result of his effort to help protect the Ballards, which left him so drained.

Within a week of his recovery a letter arrived from Mr. Ballard. Saint Germain, the letter said, had decided that Bob could be taken on staff on a "temporary basis" to perform the announcing duties previously done by Jim Rogers. Bob would be on probation to see if he could handle the work. Nothing was said about pay, but Daddy Ballard requested all sorts of information relative to Bob's financial obligations.

As soon as he could, Bob replied that he was interested in the position. Irene Hudson, who had taken care of the affairs at the two Reading Rooms while he was sick, could continue to carry on with those responsibilities. Peggy was more than capable of caring for the boys. Bob had almost totally shut Peggy out of his life. He no longer concerned himself with her point of view. According to "I Am" teachings, each individual had the right to seek "the light" in his own way, undeterred by others, including his spouse. Bob realized that he would have to continue to support his children financially, but aside from that, he considered himself free of all marital obligations.

Meanwhile the court case pending against Daddy Ballard proceeded in Chicago. Guy Ballard had served as secretary of a real estate corporation known as the Lake of Gold. One of the investors, a woman living in Chicago, had lost a large sum of money in the venture and sued Ballard in state court for not having disclosed the questionable nature of the scheme. When the case was decided against Ballard in the early fall of 1939, a judgment was handed down against him. The Ballards quickly left the state. This publicity was shattering to the "I Am" movement. Up to that time the movement had been sweeping the country, picking up converts by the thousands. Now, as a result of articles in the press and the merciless manner in which Ballard was lampooned and humiliated in print, the wave lost its momentum.

Nevertheless, Bob agreed to join the Ballards when they asked him to meet them in Cleveland in mid-October, 1939. Peggy agreed to accept \$100 a month as support for the children and was content to have Bob follow his “destiny.” Bob gave notice to WTCN, sold his car, and stripped himself of all unneeded worldly possessions, and bought a one-way rail ticket to Cleveland.

Pat Crouse, Daddy’s secretary, met Bob on his arrival in Cleveland and filled him in on the details of the Ballard operation. The Ballard entourage consisted of nine people, not counting Bob. Besides the two Ballards and Pat, Mama had a secretary, and each of the Ballards had a personal assistant. Daddy’s was named Grant. The other members of the staff were Freddie, the organist, a new female soloist, and Van, who handled some of the public relations. The Ballards usually motored from city to city using four canary-yellow Chrysler sedans. Their trunks and props were shipped by Railway Express.

It had always seemed to Bob that the Ballards had no concern for money. Still no mention had been made of his salary, until Pat explained how his personal expenses were to be handled. A receipt was to be procured for every personal expenditure made by a staff member. These would be turned in weekly and reviewed by the Ballards. If it appeared that anyone was “wasting” money they would be reprimanded. Otherwise, these expenditures were reimbursed. Bob was to receive no other funds except the \$100 a month to be sent to Peggy and an extra \$25 month for general living expenses. However, since Bob had brought \$75 along with him, Pat anticipated that he would not be needing any extra funds for at least three months. Bob was dismayed, to say the least. He had given up a fairly generous paycheck without inquiring what his new financial status would be.

When the classes opened in Cleveland, Bob put in a good performance as announcer. After a day or two, Mama Ballard took him aside to compliment him and give him a warning. “You’re doing an excellent job of announcing, Bob,” she said, “but you are staring at Daddy all the time. He doesn’t like it and I most certainly disapprove.”

“I’m sorry,” Bob said, “I didn’t realize I was doing it. Thank you for telling me, Mama. I’ll watch my manners more closely.”

“It’s more than manners, young man. It is an indication of loss of faith.”

Actually Mama Ballard was right on target, but Bob couldn’t let her know of his doubts and confusions. He wondered why he was not drawing a decent salary if Saint Germain was looking out for the Ballards. And when Pat explained that they had not paid the judgment handed down by the Chicago court, Bob was even more perplexed. Pat had explained to him that Daddy had not been feeling well, but he still couldn’t understand how Daddy could be suffering from any human ailment. He had thought of Daddy as some sort of supernatural being. Bob also began doubting some of the pronouncements made by the Ballards on stage. One of their “dictations” dealt with a pack of submarines sent by Hitler to blow up the Panama Canal. By the use of special light rays, the Masters had pinned the submarines to the floor of the ocean, where they were to be held until Hitler was destroyed. These and other such far-fetched stories had Bob’s mind in a turmoil. If such stories were not “written in letters of light” by divine beings, then Daddy or Mama Ballard must have certainly made them up.

Meanwhile the emphasis in the Ballard classes had shifted. Instead of a feeling of love and blessing, the whole operation bristled with a militancy and effort to amass power. Mama increasingly went out of her way to boast that nothing could stop them and to blast their enemies. This was a far cry from the gentle, lovely ideals that had attracted Bob to them in the first place.

Bob’s position was completely untenable. Once having joined the Ballards and seen their doings first hand, he realized how dishonest they were. But he had burned his bridges behind him. He could not return to his job at WTCN, and his pride prevented him from acknowledging that he had been duped by the Ballards. But the fact remained that he had called upon his “Presence,” and it had worked for him numerous times. So Bob determined to stick with the Ballards and beseeched his “Presence” for new guidance.

From Cleveland, the Ballards travelled to Philadelphia, where Bob had his first opportunity to attend a staff dictation. The Ballards had everyone assemble in their hotel room. Daddy sat in a chair and

concentrated on receiving messages from Saint Germain. The staff members were permitted to ask questions, which Daddy would then try to get Saint Germain to answer. Although Saint Germain advised that classes should not be conducted at Philadelphia, there was no indication if new classes should be scheduled or where they might be held. Everyone was urged to make application so that an answer would be forthcoming.

A few days later, Bob again happened to be in Daddy's hotel room and this time he was introduced to Frances Ickes, the leader of the Philadelphia Reading Room. She was urging Daddy to conduct classes in Philadelphia, as scheduled, since people had travelled from as far away as California to attend. "It would be tragic to disappoint such sincere and dedicated students of the 'I Am.' In fact some of these people are waiting outside just to see you for a moment or two."

So Daddy agreed to Frances' request. "It's the very least I can do. Open the door and ask them in."

All the staff members present stood to one side while the door was opened. A small crowd of people, most of them well-dressed women, came into the hotel room. Then something happened to Bob that he had never experienced before.

His gaze centered on one of the women. It was as though a charge of electricity had leaped between them. The object of his attention was in her late twenties or early thirties. Her face was round and crowned with a mass of flowing golden hair cut in a page boy bob. Her shoulders were draped in a lovely fur stole. Her eyes were blue and she stood about five feet six. She appeared as the personification of every feminine ideal he held.

At first Bob thought she was a lady "Master." She looked into his face and smiled. She said nothing. It was as though he had always known her.

The introductions to Ballard were brief. From Pat, Bob learned that the woman he had been staring at was Pearl Diehl. She was married and in charge of the San Francisco Reading Room.

Bob could not forget her image. One night, a few days later, he dreamed about Pearl in his sleep. Soon after this occurred, he found out where she was staying and called her to set up a rendezvous.

They met for lunch and discussed the meaning of his dream, for the Ballards had often said that dreams revealed many things. His recollection of the dream remained so vivid, that when he told Pearl about it, he was surprised that she hadn't experienced the same thing. It seemed just like the visits that Godfre had received from Saint Germain in *Unveiled Mysteries*.

Pearl was the most beautiful woman Bob had ever met. Her knowledge of the "I Am" doctrine was at least equal to his own. His heart beat wildly when he looked at her, but she denied feeling anything like the "electric current" that had shocked him when he had first seen her. Nevertheless, she held him in great respect as a member of the Ballard inner circle. It was plain that Bob was deeply infatuated with Pearl. He had never felt anything so powerful as the emotions which now engulfed him. Pearl seemed as a goddess of beauty, steeped with divine purpose.

It took some time to arrange for the new classes, and during the interval Pearl's supporters in San Francisco managed to send her the money to allow her to attend the next series of classes in Washington. Bob was elated. They had been seeing one another in Philadelphia, and their meetings continued in Washington. Despite the "I Am" teachings of sexual abstinence, Bob was very much aroused in Pearl's presence. In fact, he had great difficulty in restraining his thoughts, but Pearl always seemed above any physical desire. Meanwhile, he was physically stimulated by ideas he was supposed to be able to control. How he wanted her! But he must not let her know! When the classes were completed in Washington, Pearl had to return to San Francisco, but the two of them promised to keep in close touch.

Due to Daddy Ballard's poor health, all other classes, except one, were canceled. The staff, and Mama and Daddy were to motor cross-country to Los Angeles, where one final series would be held at the Shrine Auditorium to bring 1939 to a close. This interval would give Daddy plenty of time to recuperate before the class and limitless time afterward, before new classes had to be scheduled. Pearl, it turned out to Bob's pleasure, was able to come to Los Angeles to attend the classes. She even managed

to secure a room on the tenth floor in the Biltmore Hotel, where the Ballard entourage was housed. Nevertheless it was impossible for Bob to meet with her because friendships between staff members and students were frowned upon, and the activities of the staff were closely monitored. In fact, Mama Ballard had once questioned Bob about his interest in Pearl and cautioned him that she was happily married.

Nevertheless they were in daily contact by telephone and it so happened that the position of their rooms made them visible to one another. Bob became so high strung and emotional, knowing that Pearl was literally within his reach, that one evening after the "I Am" class was over for that day, Bob began meditating and calling for Saint Germain's assistance in order to overcome the distance between himself and Pearl. Bob went into a trance and must have hypnotized himself, as he had done on other occasions. The next thing he knew, he was in Pearl's hotel room, having negotiated a four inch wide coping on the outside of the tenth floor of the hotel, which ran some twelve feet between their two rooms. It was an incredible performance to say the least.

Bob's desire was to go to bed with Pearl. That had been his longing ever since he had first met her. How was this to be accomplished? Again, Bob went into another trance-like meditation, hoping that Saint Germain would appear and command them, for the good of the "I Am" to consummate his sexual yearnings. Despite Bob's expectations, this "dictation" did not yield the anticipated results. The message that he received from Saint Germain was that he and Pearl were to remain "pure" in deed as well as in thought. Great changes were coming within the movement. Saint Germain explained that if the two of them could harmonize themselves and work together, they would serve a most important function.

As a result of this session and his position on the Ballard staff, Pearl came to look upon Bob with a great deal of awe. On one occasion during the 17 day Shrine class sessions, Bob had an opportunity to meet with Pearl and a number of her followers from San Francisco. He met Edith Shank, a young lady originally from Delaware, and Sue Wasserman, a somewhat older lady. He also met Ethel Dazey and her daughter, Carol. Pearl's friends were suitably impressed with Bob, especially since he was on probation with the Ballard staff.

By the time classes at the Shrine Auditorium began in the latter part of December, Daddy still had not regained his health to the extent that he could appear on stage. Mama, who appeared on the stage by herself, failed to explain why Daddy's illness was not a denial of their teachings. Daddy reportedly had been inside the retreats of the Masters, where his body was supposed to have been inured to illness. Her failure to discuss this discrepancy caused serious doubts among many loyal students of the "I Am." As the classes in Los Angeles neared their end, Daddy Ballard took a turn for the worse. He had to be removed from the hotel, and was taken to his son's home in Los Angeles. Since he distrusted doctors and everyone outside the movement, he refused to go to a hospital. Daddy finally died on December 29, 1939, but the news was not made public until a day or two later. Apparently Mama wanted to give him a chance to make his "ascension," as had been promised.

By this time, the "I Am" movement had started to disintegrate. Mama made it clear that she, and only she, had the ability to remain in touch with the Masters. Meanwhile the newspapers had obtained a copy of Guy Ballard's death certificate which showed that he had died of cirrhosis of the liver and had been cremated. Both Pearl and Bob were convinced that Mama Ballard was acting arbitrarily and without guidance from on high. Her ambition for power seemed to have taken over.

Several day's after Daddy's death, Pearl returned to San Francisco. She hoped to rally the faithful "I Am" followers there. Since no new classes were scheduled, Bob remained in Los Angeles and helped Pat Crouse prepare some radio broadcasts involving transcriptions of previous classes. Meanwhile Bob's wife and children arrived in Los Angeles. He had written them, at the urging of Mama Ballard, some time before. Sons Bobby and Dave were enrolled in the "I Am" School and Peggy found employment at the school as well.

Bob still believed that he and Pearl had been called upon to perform some sort of "special" work together, but neither one of them could imagine what this would be. Their answer was not long in coming. Pearl came to visit from San Francisco, and Bob received a "dictation" from Saint Germain that

they were to co-author a book about the “I Am.” Bob was instructed to write the book, and Pearl would handle the details of publication. The book was to endorse both Daddy and Mama Ballard. The Masters had apparently come to Bob and Pearl, not to provide a rival focal point, but to urge those whose spirits were wavering to give their loyalty to Mama.

But how was this all to be accomplished? Saint Germain, in another “dictation” directed Bob to offer his resignation from the Ballard staff. He would then be able to go to San Francisco and live with Pearl and her husband, Sidney, while he was writing the book. Pearl would make arrangements for raising money to publish the book by explaining Bob’s revelations to some of her loyal following.

In order to resign from the staff, Bob requested an interview with Mama Ballard one day near the close of January, 1940. He opened his conversation with her by reciting his admiration for the manner in which she had conducted the recent Shrine Class without Daddy being present. Mama appeared to be pleased by this praise. He then explained that he had been frustrated since those classes ended. Gripping his courage, Bob then told her, “I want to resign my position, effective the end of the month. I think I can be more useful to the work away from this focus than by remaining here.”

Mama shook her head. “I don’t want you to leave, Bob. Right now, it is important that we all stand together as one. The enemies of the light are hoping to drive a wedge between members of the staff. I do hope you are calling for ‘protection’.”

“Of course, I am, Mama. I’m sure we all do. Please accept my resignation.” Then thinking of the book he was planning to write, he added, “I am positive that my departure will actually be helpful. You need have no doubts as to my loyalty.”

Mama frowned and her voice was insistent. “I don’t want to accept it. You are needed here and we are planning to resume the courses within a few months.”

As Bob stood in front of her, searching for words to counter her denial, a flash of light caused both of them to look up. He experienced a momentary feeling, like that which he felt before going into his trance-like states. Then Mama’s whole attitude changed abruptly.

“Well, I guess you have to leave at that, Bob. Saint Germain has just appeared and informed me that your request should be granted. Your resignation is accepted.”

“If government is supposed to provide everyone with an education, why isn’t it also supposed to provide everyone with a new car, a home, food to eat, clothes to wear and a baby sitter? And if government is not supposed to furnish these things, why is it supposed to furnish education? No one can successfully answer that riddle. One must either favor COMPLETE GOVERNMENT DOMINATION AND CONTROL OF OUR LIVES AT EVERY POINT ... or one must favor the removal of government domination and control of our lives at every point.” February 28, 1956

Chapter 6 – “‘I Am’ America’s Destiny” and Mail Fraud

Bob’s departure from Los Angeles was a difficult one, as it involved breaking ties with the friends he had made on the Ballard staff, and saying good-bye to his wife and children once again. Although his marriage existed only in the legal sense, he wanted Peggy to understand that he would try to meet his responsibilities towards his two sons by continuing to send them \$100 a month, however difficult he might find that to be. He had no idea what means of support he would find in San Francisco while writing his book.

It was early February, 1940, in northern California and Bob found himself living in Pearl’s penthouse. Here he met the rest of her loyal followers, including her husband, Sidney. Bob had been prepared to dislike him, but found himself irresistibly drawn towards Sidney’s good-natured charm and personality. Bob found himself treated royally by all of Pearl’s friends in the “I Am.” Although she had not revealed his plans to write a book, she had informed her friends that Bob had received “dictations” from Saint Germain and that she took notes so that his “messages” would not get lost.

He had not expected Pearl to reveal the fact that he was in touch with Saint Germain. It left him very nervous. Was he actually in touch with the Masters, he wondered? The “dictations” were certainly a mixed bag. Often they paralleled his own ideas, but at other times they dealt with topics of which he had no apparent knowledge. These visitations sparked great self-doubt in Bob. He still had not figured out what happened to him when he went into these trance-like states. They seemed like fainting spells, something slightly reminiscent of the very few “petit mal” epileptic seizures he had undergone. Just before they arrived, he would experience a sense of exaltation and then he would be lifted up inside, and feel expansive, wonderful, and above and beyond his normal self. When he would come to, he would feel exhausted.

Something happened to him when he went into these trances, but Bob couldn’t give them a rational explanation. And these trances or “dictations” continued to occur while he was in San Francisco writing the book. Nevertheless, he wondered what would happen if he suddenly announced to all of these people, Pearl’s followers, that the whole thing was a sham! Might he then not become responsible for turning them away from the most important truth they had found in their lives? Bob felt himself fenced in with no way to escape.

Pearl’s circle of friends could not have been a finer group of people. One of her best friends was Sue Gallagher. Sue was in her thirties, smart, good-looking, and sure of herself. Then came Sunny Widell and her brother, Fred. She was a private secretary. Edith Shank, who had come from the East, was a bookkeeper by profession. She was absolutely honest, personally indefatigable, and loyal. Jerry Dorris was a bachelor, who owned and operated a ranch near Santa Rosa. Ethel Dazey, whom Bob had met previously in Los Angeles, was also a close member of Pearl’s circle of friends. She cut a commanding figure and had been active in metaphysical studies for years before she joined the “I Am.” She held a real estate license, and had been in business for herself. Her oldest daughter, Ethel-Clare, let everyone know that she disagreed with the “I Am” doctrines. Carol, her middle daughter, was a beautiful woman who followed largely in her mother’s footsteps. The youngest Dazey, Ruth, was just finishing her last year of high school.

Bob worked hard on the book, feeling he had some kind of obligation not to disappoint or disillusion Pearl's friends. Pearl had little hand in it other than to offer an occasional criticism and to continue her fund-raising so as to make its publication possible. The book was titled, *I Am America's Destiny*, and dealt largely with Bob's own personal experiences in the "I Am" movement. It recounted the basic doctrine taught by Daddy Ballard and extolled the virtues of America by criticizing both the unions and the communists for undermining the government. In all respects it was a total endorsement of the "I Am" ideas.

By June of 1940, Bob had completed the manuscript and Pearl had made the necessary arrangements to get it published. When the first 400 copies were received from the publisher that summer, Pearl took them to the Reading Room in San Francisco that very night, and sold almost a hundred copies among the students gathered there.

Ethel Dazey took it upon herself to try to obtain an endorsement for the book from Mama Ballard in Los Angeles. However, when Ethel returned from L.A., she was bitterly disappointed. Mama had publicly denounced Bob, Pearl, and their book from the platform. The book was a fraud, she told students. He and Pearl were to be "blasted" into eternity for having the gall to say that Bob had ever seen Saint Germain. She said that only she could do that.

Not only did Mama Ballard's actions make book sales next to impossible, it also created a commotion among the "I Am" followers in San Francisco. In a "dictation" that Bob had after the book was completed, Saint Germain counseled Pearl to sever all her connections with the San Francisco Reading Room. She and Bob were encouraged to conduct "I Am" classes, as they had been planning, but under no circumstances were they to be critical of Mama Ballard.

During the Fall of 1940, they drove to Portland, Oregon together in order to teach their own "I Am" class. It was monumentally unsuccessful. They drew few students and had to dip into their own pockets to cover expenses. It was on this trip that Bob asked Pearl to marry him, despite the fact that both of them had other mates. Bob's continual presence in the penthouse had been devastating to Sidney, who became an alcoholic and eventually lost his job. Pearl thought she would have no trouble divorcing him when the time came. On the other hand, Bob was still legally married to Peggy, and he suspected that she looked forward to some sort of reconciliation with him in the future, if he ever became conventional in his beliefs.

Bob felt that it was time to find out if Pearl would agree to a complete sexual union if they were married. It was what he had really been longing for in all these months of friendship and courtship. But Pearl said that she would consent to having sex only if they were married and both desirous of having a child. Under no other circumstances would she consent.

When they returned to San Francisco, so much poorer from the expedition to Portland, they were confronted by the ever present problem: lack of money. It was imperative that Bob stop relying on the generosity of Pearl's friends, for not only was this source of funds drying up due to Mama Ballard's denunciation of him and Pearl, but his self-respect was suffering from having been a "kept" man for the past six months. Although Pearl wanted to call on the Masters to furnish sustenance, Bob began applying to various radio stations in San Francisco in an effort to land a job as an announcer. Although Bob could not find a position in San Francisco, he did find a job vacancy with KROW in Oakland. He was interviewed for the job but purposefully did not mention his connection with the Ballards or the "I Am." His scrapbook from WTCN in Minneapolis served his purpose well, and he outlined the type of work he had done in his home town and what he felt he was capable of doing in Oakland. He was hired and told to begin the following Monday. The next day, Bob happened across a friend he had known in the advertising business in Minneapolis, and they decided to get together to renew their friendship. Although Bob did not talk of the Ballards, he did discuss his upcoming job and how he hoped to launch a "Milkman's Club" for KROW. The Saturday before Bob was to report to work, he decided to visit the KROW studio to familiarize himself with its operation. He introduced himself to the announcer on duty and began lining up some programming for his show the coming Monday.

Bob was concentrating deeply when the station manager walked into the studio. There was a

strange look on his face and Bob sensed the tension in the air.

“Boy, am I glad to see you, LeFevre,” he said, grabbing Bob’s arm. “Come into my office so we can’t be overheard.” Something was wrong, but Bob couldn’t guess what it could be.

The station manager had received a call from the union. Somehow they had found out that Bob was going to start work in Oakland. A picket line would go up around the station, if the manager so much as let Bob near a microphone. Consequently, Bob was fired before he ever started his new job.

How had the union found out about his job with KROW?

Of course! His friend from Minneapolis must have spilled the beans. Aside from Pearl, the visiting ad-man was the only person who knew he had been hired at KROW.

Bob thought a moment and then finally recalled his last conversation with that CIO rep back in Minneapolis. They had promised to follow him all around the country, and if he raised his head above the water, “they would cut it off.” The union had been true to their word.

Bob needed money badly. Lots of money, and fast. Radio announcing seemed to be off limits, now that the union knew of his whereabouts. He was far behind in his payments to Peggy in Los Angeles, and he and Pearl were barely keeping themselves afloat at the penthouse.

He began making the rounds of employment agencies and watching “Help Wanted” ads. Within a few days he answered an ad placed by a firm interested in hiring salesmen. The firm, Inter-City Company, was owned and managed by Fred Weiss, a real estate broker by profession. Weiss’ firm specialized in what he called “business opportunities.”

To become a salesman, Bob had to obtain a Real Estate salesman’s license, as well as a Business Opportunity salesman’s license. Weiss would pay him a small weekly salary while he was undergoing training and studying for the license examinations.

LeFevre took an immediate liking to Fred Weiss and was intrigued by the nature of his business. Weiss’ salesmen, being on commission, could earn as much as they wanted, assuming they were willing to go out and hustle the market. As Weiss explained it to Bob, “In this business, the listing is the important item. Everything is for sale. That is, it’s for sale if the price is right. The way we work here is that fifty percent of all commissions come to Inter-City. If you list a property and sell it, then you get the other 50%. If you list a property and someone else sells it, you get 20% for the listing. If you sell another man’s listing, you get 30%.”

“That’s easy enough to understand,” Bob acknowledged.

“The commissions on houses are governed by law in real estate, but we stay away from that market because there is simply too much competition. Our specialty is business opportunities, the buying and selling of going businesses. We work for the seller, as a general rule. In most cases we negotiate the sale of the business and our commission is anything over and above the seller’s asking price that we can get.”

“So the commissions are sort of indefinite?” asked LeFevre.

“Yes they are. Take an example,” said Weiss. “A seller of a restaurant wants \$5000 for his lease, equipment, and good will. You might try to sell the restaurant for \$6500, but only get an offer for \$5750. At whatever price you sell, the seller gets his \$5000 and you keep the rest, half of which goes to Inter-City for having taken the listing and done advertising to find buyers.”

Now LeFevre had another question. “What if that restaurant business was really worth \$10,000? Do you pocket the other \$5000 if you sell it for \$10 grand?”

“Of course. But don’t hold your breath for it to happen. To YOU the business might appear to be worth \$10 grand. But a business is worth only what you can get for it at the time you sell it. That buyer might lose \$1000 a month on the operation or might make \$ 2 grand. Each business is what each buyer makes of it after he buys it.

“The commissions are wide open. Business is an unknown. Nobody knows what any business is worth. And no one knows what your services are worth as an agent.

“The rule is this. Get a good, clear, accurate statement from the seller. Stand on it. Tell the truth. And get as big a commission as the buyer is willing to pay for having the business brought to his

attention. Both buyer and seller will be happy, and you'll make a good living. Sometimes you'll get squeezed to the pavement and make a small commission. Sometimes you'll make it big. But on the average, you'll do all right and so will everyone else."

"You know, Mr. Weiss, I never knew business was conducted this way. It sounds exciting."

A smile appeared on Weiss' face. "It is, Bob. It's unpredictable. And you deal with a class of people who have money and who can afford to make investments."

Bob was elated when he told Pearl that he had landed a job with Inter-City. He began studying for his license examinations and reporting to the Inter-City office each morning to familiarize himself with their procedures and listings. Bob had fortuitously been assigned to one particular type of business opportunity, multiple housing. Bob dealt with hotels, motels, apartments, rooming and boarding houses, and guest house leasing. Bob shied away from handling the more lucrative opportunities, such as cafes, bars, taverns, and liquor stores because of his dislike for drinking and smoking.

While Bob was learning the business, financial affairs at the penthouse went from bad to worse. Sidney had moved out and had discontinued sending Pearl any money. He didn't have any. The little band of followers which orbited around Pearl barely managed to pay the rent on the penthouse and keep Bob and Pearl afloat. But if they gave up the penthouse, which was a focal point for the group, it was probable that the San Francisco group would scatter and lose contact with one another. None of them wanted that to happen.

Then Ethel Dazey came through with an alternative. She had been acting as real estate agent for an elderly couple who were trying to sell their lovely home in the Pacific Heights area, on Vallejo Street. They were unwilling to lower their price, and did not seem overly anxious to sell. Ethel suggested that they lease it to a "group of personal friends" whose integrity was unquestioned. The deal was consummated when the man of the house was informed by his doctor that he must move to a warmer and less invigorating climate. Ethel's suggestion appeared to be a way for them to act quickly and decisively.

The contract was signed for a two year lease for a rental fee of only \$150 per month for a ten-room, furnished house in one of the finest districts of the city. The penthouse was abandoned. Pearl and Bob, and those other students of the "I Am" who were willing, all moved under the same roof. It proved to be a very happy and commercially feasible venture for all of them.

Life at the Vallejo Street property was as cheerful and as productive as it could possibly have been for a person as eager, and yet as confused, as Bob. The coterie of students and friends was loving and loyal without exception. And the house they shared was far more luxurious than any of them could have imagined for themselves under other circumstances. It had been planned as a three bedroom home, but with very little improvisation, housed nine people, each of whom paid on the average about \$60 a month rent. Since the lease only called for a \$150 a month payment, the group ate well and enjoyed life.

The bonds that had begun forming at the penthouse, despite Mama Ballard's denunciations of Pearl and Bob, were now strengthened. Almost everyone worked during the day, but they were together every evening. It was here that the nucleus of what eventually became known as The San Francisco Group was formed. They sang songs, played games, talked about spiritual matters, and generally enjoyed one another's company.

On the morning of July 24, 1940, the entire house was abuzz with excitement by the time Bob awoke. Before he could discover what was in the wind, Ethel Dazey arrived in a state of some agitation.

Everyone gathered in the living room and Ethel spread out the front page of the *San Francisco Examiner*. The headline screamed "LeFevre and Diehl Indicted for Mail Fraud." Mrs. Ballard, her son,

Donald, and all those figuring prominently in the "I Am" movement across the country had been included in the indictment; some twenty-four people, altogether.

"Mail fraud!" Bob exclaimed. "What utter rubbish. Nobody's been mailing anything fraudulently. There must be some mistake. As a matter of fact we haven't been mailing anything, fraudulent or not."

“Of course you haven’t,” Ethel said. “But what about Mrs. Ballard?”

“I have no way of knowing what she’s been doing since I left Los Angeles. And that was months ago. Why drag Pearl and me into her activities, whatever they may be?”

There was a moment of tense silence.

“I have an attorney friend I could call on,” Ethel said, a pensive look on her face. “He’d probably take your case as a favor to me and maybe not even charge anything.”

“I don’t think there is a case at all,” Bob asserted. “That fellow Gerald Bryan who wrote *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, that was an attack on Daddy, is probably at the bottom of this indictment. He’s been encouraging people to sue the Ballards for misrepresentation. It’s like what happened in Chicago. The dark forces are doing everything in their power to stop the spread of the ‘I Am’ ideas.”

There were nods of comprehension.

“Nonetheless,” Ethel said, “this is serious. It’s a Federal indictment. That’s the government of the United States. You’ve got to fight it.”

“But how?” asked Pearl.

Ethel smiled for the first time. “You all go ahead with your breakfast and I’ll try to locate my lawyer friend. I’ll ask him what to do and phone you as soon as I find out.”

When Bob phoned the Inter-City office to explain why he would be late for work, he was greeted by one of the salesmen who had arrived early.

“So, you’re the mail fraud kid!” he said. “How big was your cut?”

“Stop it!” Bob growled. “This is serious business. Tell Fred Weiss I’ll be late for work. I’ve got to take care of this. It’s all a big mistake.”

“You’re right about that, Bob,” the salesmen said. “Somebody made a big mistake.”

“Damn,” Bob swore. “It wasn’t me.”

“Sure, sure. But what was it you promoted?”

Bob slammed down the receiver. “They believe everything they read in the papers. I’ll probably get fired for this one.”

“No you won’t,” Pearl said. “The Presence’ and Saint Germain are watching over us. You’ll see. Just don’t get a negative attitude. It won’t help at all.”

Ethel called in less than an hour. She had talked to her friend and he suggested that Pearl and Bob go to the Federal Building and find the appropriate government lawyer and explain their story to him.

So as soon as they could, Pearl and Bob drove to the Federal Building and found the federal prosecutor handling their particular indictment. They explained their involvement with the Ballards and after a few minutes the prosecutor absented himself to make a few calls. In about half an hour he returned with a smile on his face.

“It’s all being handled. The indictment is being amended and the two of you will be eliminated from the action.”

“Don’t we have to sign something?” Pearl asked.

“Not a thing.” He took a nearby chair and sat down. “You see, when the cause of action was agreed upon, the government had no clear idea of who was and who was not responsible. So they setup a dragnet indictment. They brought in every name they could find. It’s likely that most of the names will be dropped before the case actually goes to court. We’re primarily after Mr. and Mrs. Ballard.”

“Mr. Ballard isn’t around anymore,” observed Bob.

“That’s not what we hear,” said the prosecutor. “According to rumors, he’s still around somewhere, lurking in the background. Anyway, the Ballards are the kingpins, and we’re out to get them.”

Pearl and Bob exchanged glances. “So far as I know,” Bob said, “they weren’t actually guilty of anything except of preaching some fairly radical ideas. Surely they can’t be prosecuted for that?”

“No, we’re concerned with their getting money fraudulently, under false pretenses. Especially through the mails.”

Pearl stood up. "Come on Bob, let's go."

"Thanks for your help." They shook hands with the prosecutor and Bob dropped Pearl off at Vallejo and then went to work. He was expecting the worst from Fred Weiss.

When Bob finally had a chance to see Weiss privately, Weiss said, "Why not tell me all about this."

Bob said, "Sure," and ran through the entire story. He ended up explaining that the indictment had been quashed, at least as far as he and Pearl were concerned.

"I thought it was something like that," Weiss mused. He opened up his book of listings and began turning pages. After a few minutes he looked up and finally said, "Still here? You can't make any money sitting in my office. What are you waiting for?"

"I was giving you the opportunity of firing me," Bob replied.

"What for?"

"Well. ... Well my reputation seems none too good."

"You told me you didn't commit mail fraud."

"Of course. I never did."

"I believe you."

What a magnificent assurance those three words contained for Bob.

“We maintain, therefore, that man is free NATURALLY. That a condition of other-than-freedom, in which circumstances of slavery manifest, is manmade and performe artificial. We maintain that men cannot provide freedom for other men, for the freedom is theirs to begin with.” March 24,1956

Chapter 7 – Practical Business and Impractical Divorce

Under Fred Weiss’ steady and friendly hand, Bob gained some valuable, first-hand information about the nature of the real world and what made human beings tick. One day Bob was in his cubicle when his telephone rang.”Someone asking for you by name,” the receptionist said.

The client, as it turned out, was female, extraordinarily beautiful, and French. She was wrapped in a silver fox fur, had magnificent blond, shoulder-length hair, and a gorgeous face. “A movie star?” Bob wondered out loud.

As Bob came up to greet her, he noticed something else. Through the large glass windows of the office, he could see the car that had brought her. It was a long, sleek-looking limousine, with a uniformed chauffeur waiting in attendance.

When she and Bob settled back in his dingy cubicle, she broke into a torrent of French. Bob surmised that she must have learned of his name from someone and assumed that he was French-speaking. She must have expected to feel comfortable doing business with him because of their presumed common origin.

“I am so sorry,” Bob stammered. “I don’t speak French. Only a few words.”

She looked at Bob in astonishment. “But of course. How stupid of me. But the name is French, no?”

“My father’s side of the family came from France. They were Huguenot expatriates centuries ago. But my mother’s family was English.”

She was disappointed. But after a moment she brightened. “Ah, but you are HALF French?”

“That is true,” Bob replied. “Maybe the French half of me can be helpful, What can I do for you?”

The French lady smiled again and showed her dimples. “Very well, monsieur. You will do. I wish to buy a house.”

“A house? I’d love to sell you a house, but that is not our specialty. What were you looking for? Something in Pacific Heights? Sea Cliff? Nob Hill?”

“No, monsieur. The district she is here. I wish this district. Very close to this office.”

“But my dear lady. I cannot imagine how you would be happy with a house in this district. Why, it’s all commercial. This is a business district.”

“Then you do not understand. I want a HOUSE.” She said it this time with an intonation that could not be mistaken.

Bob’s eyes widened. He said, “Oh! You want A HOUSE.” “Oui, oui, is what I have said from beginning. I want a house of business.”

“I see,” Bob finally replied. This beautiful woman was far removed from Bob’s idea of what a madam would look like.

She looked pleased. “Now we are together. You will get me the house I want! If you come with me in my car, I show you where it is.”

As Bob and his client walked through the office all conversation ceased. Bob had repeatedly assured Mr. Weiss that the moral standards of his clients were their business and not his. Further, Mr. Weiss had lectured Bob that he was responsible for what he did, not for what either the buyer or seller did. The agent’s obligation was to his principal, to the party that he worked for. His job was to make a good, clean deal, make sure all the facts were represented honestly, and beyond that the agent had no

duty.

The chauffeur held the door open for Bob and the madam. In a moment the car blocked traffic in front of the desired apartment building. "I'll do my best," Bob said. "But do you mind telling me what is so special about this particular one?"

"In my business," she said, laying a soft hand on Bob's sleeve, "is poor policy for customers to meet other customers. So I need two doors. One in. One out. This one has rear door in back alley. Besides I have special permission for this house."

"You have permission?"

"But of course. There is law against pleasure. But, I have friend. In the city, no? He gives me permission to operate here. So, this is the house. Must be. Price is no never mind."

The operator of this building turned out to be another French lady. She had recently purchased the lease and furnishings and was operating a guest house. Since she had just moved in, she was in no mood to setup business elsewhere. Bob finally convinced her that he was in earnest in wanting to list her property. She agreed that if he could get her \$7500, then he was entitled to make a \$1000 on top of that. They shook hands and Bob drew out a contract and filled it in for her to sign.

Outside his client was waiting with her limousine. As Bob entered the car, he said, "Got it. But its an outrageous price. I have her signature that she will accept \$8500."

"Is good! Very good." Suddenly Bob got a kiss on the left cheek. "You are good man. Now what do I owe you."

"Nothing at all," Bob said. "My commission is being paid by the seller."

As the limousine drove back towards the Inter-City office, Bob couldn't help but wonder about his client. Finally he blurted out, "Please excuse my impertinence. But why you? You are one of the most beautiful women I have seen. In fact, I thought you were a movie star. Why are you in this line of work?"

A merry laugh came in answer. "I choose the profession. I like it. The work is pleasant. The pay is good."

Back at the office Bob received a check for \$ 8500 and an acceptance signature. When she had gone, Weiss called him into his office.

"Congratulations, Bob. You've come close to establishing a record. You brought a buyer and a seller together all in one day. Not bad. Not bad at all. Especially since you got the listing after you had the buyer."

Fred Weiss and the experiences with Inter-City had a significant impact on Bob's outlook. He came to realize that business problems could be resolved through understanding and reasonable analysis. Business at Inter-City made him think for himself, which was something that he rarely had done in the last few years.

One night at Vallejo, after retiring for the day, he lay awake. In the midst of his calls for "help," it seemed as though a voice spoke out to him: "Why don't you think for yourself?" That was a simple enough question. Up until then Bob had been asking for outside help. He believed that if he obeyed the rules, remained calm, and lived a good life the Masters would come to his aid. Now all of a sudden he wanted to know why he couldn't help himself. Perhaps it was just his own common sense coming to his rescue?

The following morning Bob discussed some ideas with Pearl. "I have the answer to at least part of our problems," he said, taking Pearl aside. "We'll get a larger guest house and then they'll be room for Peggy and the boys. We'll invite them to join us here and see if we can both convince her to grant me a divorce. Then I can marry you."

Pearl was eager and happy. "Did Saint Germain come to you last night?"

"No, I figured this one out for myself."

She looked crestfallen. "Then how do you know it will work?"

Bob was so unaccustomed to using his brain that her question caught him off guard. He realized that if he had thought about it, he could have anticipated her reaction. It really was predictable.

“Maybe it was my own ‘Presence’,” he said, seeking to forestall debate.

“But how are we going to buy a bigger place? We don’t have any money to put down.”

“We’ll sell this lease and use that money as down payment for a lease of a larger building.”

At the office, Bob informed Mr. Weiss of his plan. The lease was listed with Inter-City and by late Fall, 1941, two women guest house operators had purchased it. Meanwhile Bob had located another fine guest house at 1300 Jones Street on Nob Hill. It was a dignified brick mansion of twenty-five rooms. The owner of the guest house wanted to tend to her other interests and agreed to sell for \$5000 with \$2000 down.

In support of the Nob Hill guest house, a contingent of new and old “I Am” students, all friends of Pearl’s, appeared. The original group at Vallejo moved lock, stock, and barrel to Jones Street. Newcomers included Ruth Dazey, and sometimes, her mother, Ethel. Additionally, a cousin of the Dazey’s, Kathleen Blarney, and Nora Laidlaw and her adult son, Tom, came aboard. A few outsiders joined the crowd, but they always seemed to fit in well. Even after these additions, there was ample room for Peggy and the boys.

Pearl immediately “went to work” on Peggy, trying to convince her that it would be best to give up Bob. Peggy was pleasant but persistent. For the time being she would go along with the living arrangements Bob had put together for her. However she remained convinced that it would not last and that sooner or later Bob would gladly come back to her. Eventually his interest in the “I Am” and Pearl would lessen.

Bob finally realized that no amount of argument would change Peggy’s mind. She was legally his wife and intended to retain that status. There seemed to be only one way to obtain the divorce from Peggy, and that was to obtain a Nevada-style divorce. A six week’s residence in Nevada was the only legal stumbling block. Bob reasoned that if Peggy were brought into court, maybe she would realize that divorce would be an improvement over their present relationship.

Pearl and Bob hatched a scheme. They would go to Reno and take up residence by renting rooms at an inexpensive motel. The rental receipts would be proof they had lived there. Neither he nor Pearl could afford to live a full six weeks in Reno. They would have to travel back and forth, but it would give him a great deal of time with Pearl alone. That in itself would be valuable to him.

Finally Peggy was served with court papers and still refused to cooperate. The judge was unimpressed with Bob’s story. He refused to recognize Bob’s residency in Nevada and threw the case out of court when Peggy let it be known that she opposed any divorce.

On December 7, 1941, as Bob and Pearl were driving back from Reno, they heard the news of the Pearl Harbor bombing. It seemed to be the very event about which the Masters had warned. Bob, and Pearl, and the Ballards had tried to alert as many people as possible. But the enemies of America were on the high seas and the California coast seemed vulnerable to attack.

Once more it seemed that outside events were shaping Bob’s life. He was stirred with a great feeling of patriotism, a grim determination to do all he could in every practical way to see that the foes of America gained nothing by this apparently unprovoked attack.

“If governments have any purpose and function it is that they will protect the people from aggressive lawlessness. But all governments, through the medium of taxation, commit aggression against all citizens in order to collect the money that they plan to use to protect people from aggression.” July 2, 1956

Chapter 8 – Army Life

Following the declaration of war on December 8, 1941, the business opportunities market seemed to disintegrate. At least it did for Bob. Everything he had learned seemed to be tossed to the winds. It was an opportune time for him to take stock of his accomplishments and failures.

He had three areas of expertise. First, he was a religious philosopher of sorts, with a limited following and a great deal of personal confusion over the validity of his own beliefs. Secondly, he was an accomplished radio man, who had been blackballed, at least in the San Francisco area. Finally, he had acquired some degree of expertise in the listing and selling of business properties.

These successes were connected to what seemed to be several colossal roadblocks. He had done well on stage with the Harts, but the earthquake had shaken that dream. He had excelled in radio, but had been sidetracked by the “I Am.” He had been very successful in the business opportunity field, but now the war had put that on hold. He had failed miserably when it came to women. His first love, Charlotte, had died. His wife, Peggy, steady and loyal in all things, he no longer loved. And his real passion, Pearl, would never consent to live in sin with him. She was true to the “light.” Bob was second, not first, in her affections and he had to respect her for that, even though it did not please him. And Bob wondered about Saint Germain. Would he have nothing to do with the two of them if they disobeyed the “I Am” teachings? Was there really such a person as Saint Germain, or was Bob simply a victim of his own imagination?

Instead of keeping up hope and having patience, Bob became hopelessly depressed. Instead of doggedly keeping at work, he now began to fudge. Instead of trying for new listings, he began going to the movies every day. Sitting in a darkened movie theater, he had no fear of being recognized and had time to think about his problems. As a student of the “I Am,” his prayers seemed to have failed. And they had not prevented the Japanese from attacking the country.

At last, Bob completed his self-appraisal. At the age of 30, he seemed “over the hill.” His domestic ambitions had been a failure from the start. He’d come close to having made a failure of everything else, too. His successes had been fleeting and his mistakes long lived. In short, Bob worked up a good case of self-indulgent pity for himself.

The only constructive alternative that he saw was to offer his life to his country. He could volunteer for service in the military, even though he was beyond draft age. So on January 7, 1942, he applied for induction at the Army Center in San Francisco. During the next few days, he made all the arrangements necessary to retire from civilian life and join the military. Peggy and his two sons would return to her parents in Minneapolis. Pearl would be able to continue leading the Jones Street group. Ethel would be a strong back up.

Most of Bob’s friends were shocked by his decision. Peggy, always above reproach, stoically boarded the train for Minnesota. Pearl was stunned by the decision but soon came to her senses and looked upon Army life as the start of a new adventure for Bob. Fred Weiss promised to hold his job for him until after the war.

On the day of his physical, Bob had his first real introduction to the Army. It was rather disconcerting to a person of his background and views. He found himself in a room with about fifty other men, most of them younger, and virtually all of them showing signs of resentment and hopelessness. They didn’t want to be there but had been called forth by the draft.

There was one old-timer, whose face was seamed by weather and experience. Noticing Bob’s age, he joined him on an adjacent chair and offered his hand.

“Signing up for another hitch?” he asked pleasantly. “Me, too. I’m a re-tread.”

"I'm enlisting," Bob answered. "My first time. I'm too old for the draft, but I don't like what the Japs are doing."

"Who gives a crap?" the old-timer shrugged. "Once you get used to the Army, it ain't a bad life."

"The Army takes care of its own. You belong to them. They pay you damn little, but at least they feed you and give you a roof over your head. You don't have to worry and you don't have no responsibilities. You do what they say and that's it."

"Aren't you concerned with America?"

"Jesus Christ. Don't tell me you actually want to fight. Nobody in his right mind, except maybe the politicians in Washington, wants to fight. That's why the Army is a pretty good place to be. It's the safest place in the world, unless you draw an unlucky number."

Just then a man in Army uniform entered the room where they were sitting. "Attention!" roared the non-corn.

"Jesus, God," said the Sergeant. "I don't know where they find you cannon-fodder. Strip! Clothes off so they can see what you're made of."

With varying degrees of hesitation, the men started unbuttoning shirts and pants. Nude at last, they formed into a line by the inner door, waiting to see the doctors. Without clothing these men looked like a far cry from soldiers. "It a good thing the Japs can't see us," someone quipped.

Finally Bob reached a doctor and was declared fit. He dressed and was told to report the following day, ready to cut all his ties to civilian life. He was given a list of what to bring. It wasn't much. Uncle Sam would provide almost everything. Whatever he lacked, he would simply do without.

The following day when he reported to the recruitment office he found the waiting room hot, crowded, and yet somehow lonely. As he sat there and watched the recruits, Bob felt like an observer from another planet. Were these young men Bob sat with "normal"? Did they have the same longings as he, the same desires? Were they interested, as he was, in searching after God, discerning right from wrong? The talk was of sports, wild parties, drunken orgies, and sexual exploits. Bob heard nothing about patriotism, duty, devotion, love or beauty. What was the mental outlook of the men about him? Bob did not consider himself an intellectual, but he certainly had far different concerns than the men he heard talking. Like so many times before, Bob had given no thought to what he was getting himself into. He had never taken a moment to think what life in the Army would be like. What had he done this time?

So it was with a sense of relief that he watched a commissioned officer enter and bring the ribald chatter to a halt. A sergeant lined the men up in two rows. The officer then spoke, and Bob found it possible to identify at last. The nation was in peril. Men all over the country had been called to its defense. The oath which was about to be administered had best be taken seriously. If anyone had any doubts about it, now was the time to say so. Once the oath was taken, a man was no longer subject to civilian jurisdiction. He was an Army man. Finally Bob raised his right hand and was sworn in. This was war time, and Bob felt a sense of pride in what he had just done.

The new soldiers returned to their chairs and conversations started up again. The afternoon wore away as Bob marveled at the waste of time. Finally the sergeant returned and the men were formed into two lines. They were marched with imprecision out of the building and loaded into two buses which delivered them to the railroad depot. Here they were told to wait for their train to arrive. That had an encouraging sound to Bob, but the wait continued as the air turned chill at dusk.

Finally, they were permitted to board some cars, which had been standing at the station, all along. Within another half-hour an engine chugged up to them, hitched on, and made them a train. Bob was slowly beginning to understand Army life. Nobody knew much of anything. Everything was over-planned and under-anticipated. "Hurry up and wait."

In subsequent days, Bob managed to find time to write letters to Pearl and Peggy. He also began to appreciate the term "stir-crazy." Bob had volunteered to fight. Instead, he had been assigned to what amounted to prison. His crime was being patriotic and thinking the government needed him. He could blame no one but himself. He was the only one in the barracks that had volunteered.

After being at the Monterey Presidio for ten days, Bob was finally granted a three hour pass for

the upcoming Sunday. He phoned Pearl and she arranged to meet him at the designated time. He had never appreciated her more than at the moment he spotted her after he passed the stockade boundary. For one thing, her face was the first familiar one he had seen since induction. For another, her beautiful feminine form had never seemed more tantalizing. Three hours with Pearl seemed a very short time.

His stay at Monterey came to an end during February, 1942, and Bob was shipped north to Geiger Field, near Spokane, Washington. Here he was assigned to the Signal Corps. His radio background had done the trick. He was to become an electrical technician until it was discovered that he was totally inept at assembling or disassembling a radio set, and incredibly stupid when it came to learning Morse Code. He quickly became the worst misfit in the company when it came to the real work of the Signal Corps.

At Geiger Field, he still had plenty of time to keep up his correspondence with Pearl and Peggy. When Pearl learned that Bob would be stationed there longer than a month, she arranged to turn over the Jones Street operation to Ethel and flew to Spokane taking a job as a PBX operator on the base. This would allow her to be near Bob and take advantage of the occasional weekend passes he could obtain.

As company misfit, Bob usually ended up with all sorts of weird jobs to perform. It was indirect punishment for not being able to repair radios. One day he was assigned to distribute Geiger Field telephone directories at Fort George Wright, about ten miles away.

As Bob neared the end of his task, he found himself in the Headquarters complex and he happened to enter the offices of a Lt. Col. Cella. For some unknown reason, Cella took note of Bob and approached him.

“What’s your name?” he asked, directing the question to Bob. “Private LeFevre, Sir.” Bob tried to pop to attention without dropping the telephone directories in his hands.

Cella frowned. “Do I know you from somewhere?”

Bob searched his memory. Was this man a disguised Master or an “I Am” student?

“Not to my knowledge, Sir.”

“What are you doing?”

“I’m distributing phone directories from Geiger Field, Sir.” “I can see that, but what are your regularly assigned duties?” “Signal Corps.”

“Do you like the work?”

Bob wondered how truthful he should be. This was the highest ranking person he had talked to since he had been in the service. What did he have to lose?

“No, Sir. I detest it. I have been classified as a technician because someone saw my radio announcer’s background on my aptitude test.”

“You don’t belong in the Signal Corps,” Cella stated matter of factly. “Would you like to come to work for me?”

“Me?” Bob grinned from ear to ear. “I’d love it.”

“When you get back to your company commander tell him I want you assigned to me.”

“Yes, Sir. But I doubt if my Captain will pay attention to anything I say. He thinks I’m the company misfit and refused my application for Officer Candidate status. He assured me I didn’t have the brains.”

“Anyone with half an eye can see you don’t belong in the Signal Corps. You’re coming over to Fort Wright.” Then turning to his sergeant, Cella ordered, “Get me the General. Tell him I want LeFevre assigned to my section and to relay the orders to Geiger Field.”

A week later, after Bob was settled in at Fort Wright, he found that his Signal Corps’ company had been activated and shipped to the Pacific Theater. Two years later he learned that they had been wiped out on a Pacific atoll when their position had been over-run by the Japanese. So it was Lt. Col Cella that he had to thank for his life.

That was not all Bob had Lt. Col. Cella to thank for. Bob found Fort Wright a paradise compared to Monterey and Geiger Field. The food was good, even for a vegetarian. Bob received frequent passes, which enabled him to spend time with Pearl. He also received frequent promotions, from private to

corporal, then to sergeant. Then Cella recommended that he put in for Officer Candidate status again.

Bob's application was approved, and he prepared to be shipped out to Miami Beach, Florida, where he would undergo a three month intensive OCS training. Pearl made arrangements to return to San Francisco, as it would be impossible for her to see him during that time since the Army did not permit visitors at OCS.

In the late summer of 1942, Bob boarded the train at Spokane. The three day and two night trip across the country gave him one of the best opportunities he had had in a long time to review his own situation. He felt it needed doing.

He had joined the Army partly in an act of desperation. Although he had patriotic intentions, he realized that he was using the Army as a haven from his wife, Peggy, whom he did not love, and from Pearl, whom he had adored in frustration. Pearl, however, was losing her appeal. She had become too demanding, and still put the "I Am" doctrine ahead of everything else. Officer Candidate School offered the perfect escape from Pearl.

Bob realized that the Army was offering him a new lease on life. By the time the train pulled into the station at Miami, Bob had resolved to become a good soldier and a good officer, dedicated to eradicating the evils of Hitler and Tojo. They were evil men because of the cruelties and injuries they were ordering to be inflicted on hundreds of thousands of others. Bob now had a new crusade. He could now get all the "I Am" thoughts out of his head.

The late summer and early fall days of 1942 were among the happiest of his entire Army career. First, his attitude had changed and he now felt himself dedicated to fighting and winning the war. Second, he finally felt appreciative towards the Army since it was now training him. Third, the physical exercise which Officer Candidate School required of him did his body a world of good. And finally, the challenge of new learning kept his morale high.

The half-way point in the Officer Candidate program proved to be a milestone for Bob. He wrote to both Peggy and Pearl, giving them his view of his situation, as he saw it.

To Pearl he explained that he was still dedicated to the teachings of the "I Am", even though he had begun doubting some of them. He reaffirmed what he had wanted all along — to divorce Peggy and marry her. Until he was able to, Bob suggested that she and Sidney get back together. In the meantime, with the war going on, all Bob could do would be to devote himself to the war effort and become an effective military man. Since Peggy had absolutely refused to grant him a divorce, Bob wrote wondering if perhaps she was ready to live with him once again, as soon as he had completed OCS and been promoted to lieutenant. He soon heard from Peggy in the affirmative.

One evening towards the end of OCS, Pearl appeared on the scene. She was unaware of Bob's intention to rejoin Peggy and so Bob was on the defensive when they met. Bob gathered up only enough courage to tell her that her arrival was poorly timed, since he was expecting orders to report elsewhere. Her presence opened up all of Bob's old wounds. It was so easy to desire her, but Bob realized that if he intended a reconciliation with Peggy, he would have to keep Pearl out of his life. His heartaches had been too painful to want to live through them again.

The last time Bob saw Pearl in Miami Beach was after he had graduated from OCS and was leaving for Mitchell Field, Long Island, to report for duty. He finally got up enough nerve to tell her that he had decided to go back to Peggy. Bob managed to shrug off her questions about their work with the Masters. This was not the time nor place to tell her more about his emerging doubts. Bob refused to tell her where he was being sent, but promised to write her. That was as far as he would commit himself.

At Mitchell Field, Bob found himself assigned to Special Services, along with a friend, Vern Hansen, whom he had met on the train trip from Miami. Their paths were to cross repeatedly in the coming years. Bob wrote Peggy, and she and the boys soon arrived. Bob took up living with his family but soon realized that he and Peggy had actually grown further apart during the last three years.

Several weeks after Peggy arrived in Long Island, Bob was reassigned to the Army Air Base at Philadelphia. He was to become Special Services Officer there. His reunion with Peggy had been of short duration. They decided she should remain in New York, until he could make arrangements in

Philadelphia to send for her.

The assignment to Philadelphia, it turned out, was like being sent to Siberia. The Army Air base there had been established only three months previously and did not even boast a commanding officer. The base consisted of a runway, a couple of hangars, and a single squadron of fighter planes. There were about a dozen temporary structures, which had been erected as barracks, and one headquarters building. The rest of the camp was swamp.

As adjutant to the captain-in-charge, Bob was given the responsibility to make the Philadelphia Army Air base function as it should. This meant obtaining coal for furnaces, straightening out payroll records, and doing whatever needed to be done. Eventually a semblance of order emerged.

In the Spring of 1943, LeFevre was rewarded with a new assignment to Baltimore, where the First Army Air Force was headquartered at Sparrow's Point. Here LeFevre became Special Services Officer responsible for bases at Baltimore and Camp Springs, Md., Dover, Delaware, Millville, New Jersey, and Philadelphia. His new responsibilities merited a promotion and he anxiously wrote Peggy to rejoin him in Baltimore. Although she arrived in Baltimore and set up housekeeping, Bob's home life was nearly non-existent. He spent much time out of town, tending to the other bases under his care. He had less and less time for Peggy, until they both finally realized that their marriage would never work. With her consent, Bob moved into Bachelor Officer's Quarters and left Peggy and the boys in their rented house, nearby.

While Bob's marriage was dissolving again and for the last time, he met another very intriguing woman from Baltimore. On St. Patrick's Day, 1943, he had arranged for special entertainment for the men at the Baltimore base. By telephone, he had booked a troupe of USO performers to come to the make-shift theater he had set up on base at Sparrow's Point.

The men gathered for the performance, but the troupe was late. LeFevre and his people did all they could do to occupy the disgruntled soldiers. What a day it had been: miserable, overcast, and cold.

When the door of T-100 (LeFevre's office) finally opened to admit the performers, one of the most beautiful women LeFevre had ever seen walked in. She wore an emerald green velveteen dress and a big, floppy hat of rose pink. Her face was laughing, her eyes sparkled, and her figure was whistle-sure. She was accompanied by a female dowager who regarded LeFevre with hostility.

"Is this T-100?" the lovely one asked. "God what a trip! I know *we're* late, but we got stuck in the mud and ended up riding in a Red Cross ambulance to get here." The rest of the performers trooped in. There was a pianist, a vocalist, and an accordionist, packing his instrument. The beautiful lady introduced herself as Loy Reuling. The older woman with Loy had been sent as a chaperone.

"Whenever you're ready, I'll take you over to the theater. Actually it's a barn, but who cares?"

"It's not very much like Aberdeen," Loy observed.

"I've never been there, but I'm sure you're right. There is nothing on earth quite resembling Sparrow's Point. Anything that could resemble it is deep underground. Deep."

Loy laughed merrily and it made LeFevre feel good. This gal knew her stuff and nothing seemed to faze her.

Bob led the group out on stage and introduced them. There were no star performances until Loy appeared on stage by herself. Then the men sat up and took notice.

Her voice was a rich, throaty mezzo-soprano that filled the old wooden building with tones that brought pure delight. What a glorious voice she had. The men leaped to their feet in applause. She sang again and again and concluded with "Danny Boy" as a tribute to St. Patrick. Loy made the show. She was gorgeous, both to look at and to hear.

Even compared to Pearl, Bob realized he had never seen a woman more vibrant, more beautiful, more alive to her fingertips. It was a joy being in her company.

During the next two days, Bob was surprised to see what an impression Loy had really made on him. His thoughts kept reverting to her at odd moments. How strange this was, he thought. He was a married man who had unsuccessfully staged a reconciliation with his first wife. He had Pearl waiting in the wings, if the time came whenever they might be able to marry. LeFevre was certainly in no position

to let the thoughts of a third woman intrude. Loy seemed much too young for him. Yet it was her very youth and enthusiasm that captivated him.

It came as a complete surprise when the phone rang a few day's later and Loy's unmistakable voice came across the wire.

"What is it, Lieutenant?" she asked. "I'm returning your call."

"Returning my call?" Bob was practically speechless. "There must be some mistake. I never called you."

"I'm sure I have the message right," she said. "I don't understand this."

"I don't either." Bob was embarrassed and there was no mistaking her tone. She was too.

"Well, its mysterious," she laughed. "But since I do have you on the phone, let me invite you to a dance. The Womens Officers' Club is giving one this Sunday. You're welcome if you'd care to come."

"Thanks very much," Bob said. "I doubt if I can come but I appreciate the invitation. So long."

"Good-bye," and they both hung up.

Shortly afterwards, the phone on LeFevre's desk rang again. This time it was his buddy, Vern Hansen, who was still stationed at Mitchell Field.

"I'm coming down to Baltimore this Sunday. I have a couple of days off and thought I'd spend them in your vicinity so we could swap yarns."

"Hey, that's great," Bob intoned. "It'll be good to see you again, you old rascal."

The next Sunday Bob was at the train station but he never did find Vern. He called Mitchell Field but Vern was reported off base. Bob had been looking forward to seeing him. What was he to do now?

He recalled Loy's invitation and decided to take advantage of it. Perhaps he might establish a good contact for some future entertainment at the base.

When Bob walked into the Womens Officers' Club, Loy spotted him. She was dancing with another officer, but excused herself immediately. She had made a date with another lieutenant, since she hadn't expected Bob to appear.

She and Bob danced a few times and she introduced him to the president of the women's organization and to several other people she thought he might like to know.

By then her date had found himself someone else to dance with and Loy suggested that they go elsewhere. Bob was agreeable and they walked to a small night club nearby.

Bob was embarrassed again. He had to explain to this lovely young thing that he had never before entered a night club. Loy was incredulous at first. She could hardly believe it.

When Bob added that he didn't drink, the shock was real. This time she believed him and gave him a bit of a scolding for being so immature. She explained to Bob that during her youth, wine – most of it homemade – was served regularly in her home. She had grown up with it. There was only one thing for him to do. Have his first drink with her.

Bob felt as though he was committing a mortal sin, but asked her what she would suggest as his first libation. She recommended a glass of port wine and ordered a Manhattan for herself.

It happened that the night club was within a short distance of Loy's home, so Bob escorted her. They sat down on her front steps and talked until two a.m. Loy told him all about her childhood, her upbringing, and love for music. She had been a scholarship winner at the Peabody Institute and sang opera, folk music, just about anything. Her father had been a barber, but was dead and she lived with her mother and a younger sister.

Curiously, Bob found himself confiding in her. She already knew that Bob was married and had two children, because he had previously told her that when they met at Sparrow's Point. Bob now learned that he was nine years her senior. He related some of his experiences with the "I Am" and also explained the moral code that he followed was a strict one that allowed for no sexual intercourse outside of marriage, and none in marriage unless a child was desired.

It was the second time that evening that Loy stared at him as though he were a freak. Finally she spoke up. "I'll tell you one thing," she said. "When and if I marry, I'm going to have a normal sex life. I

think sex is important. I think your ideas about sex are weird.”

Bob also explained that he felt himself “under direction” and that he believed he had a major contribution to make to mankind with his life. He might not know what it was, but he felt convinced that it was so. Loy laughed in disbelief.

Bob had never had that kind of reaction. Without exception, every woman he had ever met thought his high standards of sexual conduct and his ability to contribute something to the world were to be applauded. Loy thought both were silly.

When Bob departed, he walked down the hill to his car a very puzzled man. Loy was not only vivacious and a joy to be with, she was an honest woman. Bob had not intended to be interested in her, but his curiosity had been piqued. He wanted to know more.

Shortly after this meeting with Loy, Bob was permanently assigned to the Army base at Camp Springs, Md. He was assigned a former farm house as his base of operations and was given the task of organizing Special Services from the ground up. Fortunately, ample personnel were on hand and he had plenty of assistance. His new orders required that he visit all the subordinate bases. Realizing that he would have time to stop and visit New York City, Bob thought of Loy and called her.

His train would be going from Washington to Baltimore and then up north, would it be possible for her to accompany him so he could show her New York? Without hesitation she agreed and the arrangements were made for them to meet.

Bob booked adjoining rooms at the hotel in New York and behaved in harmony with the principles he had expressed to Loy during their doorstep conversation. Bob wanted to be with her and wanted nothing to interfere with their relationship, in which he viewed himself as an older and more experienced friend. He clearly needed someone to confide in and Loy, despite her age, seemed eager to listen.

When Bob returned to Camp Springs, there was a message waiting for him. Pearl had arrived in Washington, D.C. and wanted to see him. This unexpected development upset him. Was Saint Germain imploring him to have nothing to do with the lady in Baltimore? A whole new set of guilt switches was tripped.

Bob telephoned Pearl and they made an appointment for the next evening. They debated whether or not Peggy would agree to a divorce, now that she had tried and failed in reconciliation with Bob. He was of the opinion that she would never agree to a divorce. Pearl was more optimistic. The only way Bob could envision Peggy agreeing to a divorce was if she had another man to take his place.

Pearl still loved Bob and wanted to be near him, so together they could continue to get instruction from the Masters and thus carry on the “I Am” work. Even though she understood she would not be able to see Bob often, she planned to settle down in the area near him and find a job. Bob was once again confronted with all the abnormalities of his “I Am” background. Bob could hardly avoid Pearl, nor did he wish to drop her altogether. What he did want to do and found most difficult was to discuss some of the doubts that he had developed about the “I Am” doctrine. He still recognized that there were elements of its teachings quite in harmony with reality, but he could not get her to acknowledge that the Masters might not be either infallible or all-knowing.

Bob tried to see Loy as often as possible, whenever he went out of town. She was his “escape hatch” from the feeling of being different, which had so often plagued him subconsciously. Often while at Camp Springs, he was called on to attend functions at the Officer’s Club. His inability to drink (even that glass of port wine had made him dizzy), and refusal to eat meat set him apart as “different.” Loy was “normal” in the sense that she was an integral part and product of the society with which she was familiar. Bob envied her outlook, cheerful, optimistic, and always filled with music and excitement.

After successfully completing a two-week advanced course of study at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, Bob was promoted to Captain. It also marked a new turn of events. Officers of the rank of Captain were often put in command of companies and ordered to deliver their men to a base in England used as a staging area.

Bob was ordered to fill just such an assignment. Since this meant a movement overseas, he was

entitled to a three week leave of absence. Bob told Pearl of this new development and she put her cards on the table. If Peggy would permit herself to be divorced from Bob, and if she were divorced from Sidney, was Bob still interested in marrying her? Bob equivocated, but he did assure her that nothing had changed except that he was sure Peggy would not divorce him and that he had given up on all prospects of marrying Pearl.

Pearl was confident that she could achieve both sets of divorces. Bob was to leave it in her hands. What was she planning? She merely assured Bob that Sidney was willing to cooperate. Who could tell what would happen?

Pearl had stimulated his hopes for a divorce from Peggy, but he was now in a state of emotional limbo. What would he do if he were divorced from Peggy?

By chance Bob walked by a jewelry store and noticed a beautiful aqua-marine ring. A small hole had been bored through the center of the oblong stone and a diamond was set in the hole. The craftsmanship was most unusual and the ring was stunning.

He thought of Pearl. She would love the ring.

Then he thought of Loy. She would adore it.

Bob added it up. If he married Pearl, he would be clearly devoting himself to the "I Am" doctrine the rest of his life. If he married Loy, he would live a far more normal life in the world of human affairs. What should he do?

There was nothing magic about what happened. Bob was suddenly overwhelmed with the thought that all his life he had been doing what other people wanted him to do. Being of service would continue with Pearl. If he married Loy, he would be acting in terms of his own self-interest. He bought the ring for Loy.

The next time that he saw Loy in Baltimore, he presented her with the ring. He explained that he was seeking a divorce, but that meanwhile, he wanted her to wear the ring as his bride-to-be. Their marriage was tentative to say the least, but would she come with him to visit his mother in Minnesota?

She agreed to wear the ring and drive west with him. Although Ethel LeFevre had never really approved of Bob's marriage to Peggy, once she overcame the idea that Loy was too young for Bob, she gave her approval. Bob's mother knew about Pearl and was surprised to learn that Bob had changed his mind about her.

Bob and Loy returned to Baltimore. Bob was to report immediately to Bradley Field, Connecticut, where he was to prepare two hundred men for duty overseas.

“Let us abandon the fallacy that it is the men in [political] office who do the corrupting. It is the office which does the corrupting of men.” July 28,1956

Chapter 9 – Overseas, Remarried, and Back to Europe

At Bradley Field, Bob assumed the duties of command for more than 200 men who wanted no part of the Army, much less anything to do with anyone in command. Bob’s responsibility as their commanding officer was to get them in shape and take them overseas, as soon as the last of them reported in. The men came from various bases all over the United States, and it took time to secure their personnel files and obtain documents that were missing. Bob was allotted two weeks to accomplish this. He found it not only impossible to do, but equally impossible to organize the men. They refused to recognize Army authority. At least a dozen went AWOL while under Bob’s command.

When time came to depart he could muster only 182. Some of the missing men had never reported to Bradley Field; the balance had disappeared after reporting. When the order came to report to Camp Kilmer to prepare for overseas departure, Bob was actually amazed that he received compliance rather than rebellion. From there the men were taken to New York City for embarkation on the “Ile de France.” A week later they landed in Liverpool, England where Bob’s responsibilities ended. Bob was sent to London, where he remained for three weeks, before room was found for him on an Army transport plane returning to the United States.

Bob returned to the base in Camp Springs in early 1944, after being out of the country for almost two months. He saluted the Major before him, handing over his orders.

“Captain LeFevre, reporting for duty.”

“So you came back,” was the cryptic response.

“We didn’t expect you. Everyone else who’s had a crack at that assignment has managed to be re-assigned in Europe. While you were gone we appointed a new Special Services Officer and there really is no place to fit you in.”

“Well, what am I supposed to do?” asked Bob. “Go back to Europe?”

The Major laughed. “No. We’ll find something. I’ll assign you to B.O.Q. and we’ll see what turns up. Meanwhile you’re unassigned.”

“In that case, Sir, how about a pass. I have friends in Baltimore that I’d like to see.”

“No problem.” The Major signed a pass and handed it to LeFevre. “I’m leaving the time up to you. Fill in that part when you’re ready.”

“Hey, that’s great. Thanks.”

“Oh, before I forget, LeFevre, Chaplain Arends wants to see you. He said he had some important information for you and asked to be put in touch as soon as possible.

“Arends is now our legal officer, too. I think there’s been some legal development in your affairs.”

“Some legal developments?” Bob went blank.

“Go see Arends,” the Major repeated.

“Right.”

Bob directed his staff car driver to the chapel and found Arends in his office. It turned out that while he had been overseas, Mendis had received notification that Bob had been divorced. Somehow Pearl had done it!

LeFevre left the Chaplain’s office shaking his head. All he could do was guess that Pearl had convinced Peggy to change her mind. He was a free man now, but he wondered if he had any obligations toward Pearl? Was he bound to marry her once she was divorced from Sidney? He had already bought that ring for Loy and made up his mind to marry her, if and when he was free to do so. He realized this was no time to waver. If he were going to act in his own best interest and really break

from the “I Am” then he would have to act at once and stick with Loy. It was his only chance.

This meant he ought not even let Pearl know he had returned from Europe. She was so persuasive. Just talking to her might recreate uncertainty in his mind. For once he really knew what he wanted — not what Saint Germain wanted, if there really were a Saint Germain.

Early the next day, Bob headed for Baltimore on the first train. It was Palm Sunday. He rang the doorbell at the Reuling residence. Loy came to the door still in her pajamas and robe and was startled to see him.

When they settled down inside, Bob told her that his divorce had come through. “I want to marry you. Right away. That is, if you still want me.”

“Of course I do, silly.”

“How soon can you be ready?”

First estimates entailed a month. Except for obtaining the marriage license, Bob was ready to have the ceremony that afternoon.

“You know how the Army is,” he said to her and the family. “At the moment I am unassigned. But that won’t last long. I’m finally single and I have the time. A month is much too long. They might have me back in Europe by then.”

Whatever obstacles were raised, Bob swept them aside. They concluded that all the details could be completed within a week, if they really went to work on them”

“Where will the ceremony be held?” asked Loy.

Bob thought for a moment and then said, “I have an idea. Why not have the wedding at Camp Springs? Major Arends is Chaplain and a good friend of mine. I think he’d be delighted to perform the honors, especially if we had an Easter wedding next Sunday.”

All the arrangements were finally set and Bob returned to Camp Springs. As he resumed his day-to-day routine at Camp Springs, Bob realized that his anxieties had more to do with Pearl, than about his future Army work, or his marriage to Loy. He needed to be safely anchored to another woman before he could face Pearl and tell her the truth.

But there was more to his situation than that. Loy did offer some very positive advantages in becoming his wife. She was so different from Pearl. She was pragmatic, and whereas Pearl would have demanded everything from Bob, Loy would in all likelihood demand very little. Pearl was complicated, complex, and difficult. Loy was simple, direct, and easy to get along with. But most of all it was Loy’s attitude with respect to sex that intrigued Bob the most. She wasn’t immoral. It was just that she enjoyed herself. To her sex was normal, natural and desirable.

At any rate the die was cast, when out of the blue came a letter from Pearl. She had already obtained her divorce from Sidney. Bob had more or less expected that. But the big news was that Peggy was already remarried. She and the boys had moved back to San Francisco and taken up housekeeping with Sidney, of all people. So while Bob had been crossing the Atlantic, his former wife had wedded the former husband of the woman he had loved to distraction. Pearl’s letter also made it clear that she looked forward to her marriage to Bob.

Their wedding on Easter Sunday went off without a hitch. Bob and Loy took the train to Philadelphia for a short honeymoon. She had decided to keep her job at the B & O and continue to live at home, at least until Bob received his new assignment. Bob, meanwhile, reported back to the base at Camp Springs to await further orders.

After working as a liaison officer for a short time, LeFevre was called to the Adjutant’s office and advised that he was to be relieved of these duties. He had been assigned to a new Special Services School in Lexington, Virginia, where he was to participate in a two week course of study.

LeFevre journeyed by train to Lexington and Loy remained in Baltimore. This special course of study turned out to be a repeat of his previous experience there except one new class had been added. It was taught by a Major who was a lecturing psychologist.

Bob had never really taken an interest in psychology and had read nothing on the subject. In the classroom one day, the Major put on the blackboard, a model of the process by which people learn. He

described the mental tendencies of human beings exactly as the “I Am” teachings set them forth, but with one difference. His terms were worldly and at least quasi-scientific, while those that the Ballards used were spiritual and religious.

There was no mistaking the similarity, even the identical nature of the material being taught. All Bob could do was stare at the Major. Was he a Master operating in disguise? How could he possibly know these things unless he had been taught in some spiritual retreat?

To test the class, the Major posed a tough question, but LeFevre knew the answer based upon his knowledge of the “I Am.” This startled the Major and actually brought the class to a halt. Now it was the Major’s turn to stare. How could LeFevre have possibly known the answer? In all his years of teaching and his many thousands of students, he had never had that question answered correctly before by anyone who had never studied psychology. LeFevre was too embarrassed to admit the truth. He lamely said that it seemed logical to him.

This trivial event was enormously meaningful to Bob. It confirmed what he had already suspected. The ridicule and abuse so often heaped upon the followers of the “I Am” often resulted from their use of words and their insistence on calling things miraculous or divine. If the adherents of the “I Am” had used more conventional and scientific language, their message that self-control was the most important ingredient of spiritual freedom and physical liberty could have been accepted with little question.

After completing this course and returning to Camp Springs, Bob was given a choice as to his next assignment. Several air bases needed a Special Services Officer. He could select to return to Mitchell Field, go to a spot in Michigan, or become an assistant to the Special Services man in Nashville.

Nothing could have induced Bob to return to Mitchell Field, and he had already had his fill of cold winters in the north. So that left Nashville as the most attractive of the alternatives. Loy would be able to accompany him, so that his life with his new bride could, at last, begin.

The drive to Nashville, Tennessee in June of 1944 was uneventful. It did, however, give the newlyweds a chance to get acquainted. They were a beautiful pair. Bob looked trim and neat in his officer’s uniform; one hundred and eighty pounds of firm muscle, standing six feet tall. Loy’s perpetual smile graced her attractive face. Slim and feminine, she carried herself well, too. They seemed meant for each other.

There were many things that Bob wanted to tell Loy. He wanted her to know what he had done in the “I Am,” and to understand everything about Pearl, the Masters, and even his own confusion. Loy looked at that entire area of his life as strange, even “weird.” She accepted Bob’s involvement as unavoidable, since it related to what had been, but she believed that he had renounced all interest in that area, which wasn’t true.

On the other hand, Loy had a fantastic knowledge of music and had done her share of performances on platform and radio. She was attracted to all forms of music - symphony, opera, light classic, popular ballads, jazz, country, western. Further she knew the voices and styles of most performers. Music circulated through Loy like her own blood.

Despite these profoundly divergent pathways, Bob and Loy loved one another. And from that they learned a great lesson. They did not have to change one another. They only had to appreciate the fact that each of them was a unique individual and never could duplicate the other, even to the extent of what the other knew. It was these differences between them, which they tolerated, that made their marriage work. Loy realized this innately, it seemed, and Bob grasped it as he came to know Loy better.

Bob worked in Nashville with the Air Transport Command, and outside of his time at OCS in Miami Beach, it was one of the finest military assignments that he drew while in the service. He was placed in charge of the Army Orientation Program, which included lecturing and teaching in conjunction with a series of propaganda films put out by the War Department, titled “Why We Fight.” His job was to arouse the patriotism of men going overseas, many of them for the first time. His classes became popular, particularly after he developed some lectures on American patriotism and the Revolutionary

War.

One day in September (1944), Colonel Evans, the base commander, sent for him. The Colonel started off his conversation, by saying, "I'm delighted with the job you are doing. But I have orders to tell you about an opportunity overseas that will be yours if you accept the assignment. The only thing I can't understand is how you got selected.

"The War Department has approved the launching of a newspaper for the armed forces in Europe. They are looking for an editor to ramrod the project."

Bob's ambitions soared. To be an editor! And of a major army newspaper!

Bob readily accepted the new assignment. When Bob and Loy talked over this new development, they agreed that they would drive back to Baltimore, where Loy could stay with her mother. Loy took the disruption philosophically. Her mother would be glad to have her around. The war couldn't last forever.

Bob shipped out of New York, and after arriving in London, he discovered that the editor's job had been filled months previously. Not only that, but he was approximately the 15th officer to show up to claim the position. Bob wasn't sure if he was more disappointed or angry. But he was disgusted. He had left his bride and a prize post in the States so that he could loll around while waiting for someone to think of something for him to do?

He and the fourteen others shared similar feelings. One of them pointed out the enormous cost to the taxpayers for this ridiculous duplication of effort. Bob had never thought of the Army in this way before. There were thousands of people in America making low wages and being taxed up to their ears for this boondoggle. Why hadn't the top brass issued a cancellation of their prior orders, once they had selected an editor?

A week went by in which Bob passed the time waiting for a new assignment. Nothing happened. Then it was decided that some splendid opportunities were being lost. Why not organize the men still without assignment, put them into classes, and bring them up to date on what the Special Services Section was trying to accomplish? Clearly, something had to be done because new Captains kept appearing. By this time, forty men had assembled for the one job, which had already been taken.

Major Wilson, newly arrived from the States, delivered these lectures. Wilson's primary purpose was to stress the importance of education to soldiers in the Army. It finally dawned on Bob, that to men like Wilson the war was a God-send. Thanks to the war, there were thousands of men in the service who would enroll in course work, earn high school diplomas or continue work they had started in college. Wilson's primary fear was that the war would finish too quickly. There wouldn't be time for all these men to complete their studies. This attitude shocked Bob. How could the war end too soon, he wondered? Was Wilson's project more important than ending the fighting?

Not only that, but Wilson and his superiors had plans for what would happen after the war. Some men would go home and be released from the service, but most would remain in the military. Those needed in the Pacific would be transferred there, but the bulk of American manpower would remain in Europe as a permanent policing force. This surprised many, but Bob appeared to be the only one willing to challenge that policy. Why shouldn't the Americans get out of Europe as quickly as possible to let them heal their ruptured lives and put things together?

Bob became more disgusted as time passed. He had written Loy, but had received no answers. Since he had always tended to be a "loner" his time in London passed slowly.

Time continued to pass and Bob's increasing frustration was augmented by his failure to hear from Loy. His imagination ran rampant. She was back at work, among friends. In short, he became jealous. But he realized that if he had had a full time job he would have had far less time to worry about these concerns.

To help pass the evenings, he sometimes went to the cinema. On one such occasion, two long lines were moving toward the ticket windows. The theater was packed and the lines were advancing slowly. Bob noticed a slender young lady opposite him in the other line. He made some off-hand remark, intended for her benefit, and was rewarded with a quick smile and a response in some

unrecognizable accent.

A conversation began and soon Bob and this young lady were chatting in mutual appreciation at each having found a focal point of consciousness in a world made up of strangers. Once inside the theater, poorly positioned seats, a smoke filled room, and an old film all prompted Bob to ask if there wasn't someplace else they could go to share a snack and conversation. His companion, whose name was Marjorie ("Marji") Llewellyn, said there was, and the two departed.

Seated in a Lyons Corner House, Bob discovered that Marjorie was from Wales and was working in London as a physical therapist at a local hospital. She was attractive, intelligent, and single, and Bob informed her of his recent marriage. There was a certain quality about Marjorie that warmed Bob's heart. He explained his interest in metaphysics and philosophy, and she responded by showing her fascination. Bob found her at once respectful and stimulating. After about an hour, Bob taxied her to her apartment and received a promise that they might see one another again. They did, and on one occasion Bob's friend, Vern Hansen, joined them.

Finally the mail came through, and Bob received six letters from Loy. She was happy, and informed Bob that she had been dating other soldiers, as she did her bit for the USO and Women's Service Club. This upset Bob at first, until he realized that he, too, had been dating Marji. He could see Loy's side of it and was reasonably certain that she had complete respect for their marriage vows. He only hoped that he would be able to maintain the same constancy.

By November, 1944, Bob's new orders had finally been cut. He was assigned to Special Services in Paris. He was to be in charge of promoting the Army Education Program, Phase Two. The prospect of getting to Paris brightened his outlook considerably. Bob was billeted at the Elysee Star Hotel, near the Arch of Triumph. Here he shared a room with a Captain Charles Steinberg. The two of them settled in and were ordered to report to the Shell Building, which had been taken over by Special Services.

It turned out his new job was basically a title without a function. Neither he nor the two assistants and one translator that he commanded were given anything to do. They were furnished office space and told to put in time. His desk in his sixth floor office contained nothing but his original directive and a copy of a memo he had prepared and been told to put on "hold." There was nothing in his "In" basket; nothing in his "Out" basket; and only his memo in the "Hold" bin.

Bob's disenchantment with the military, which had begun in London, continued in Paris. There was so much waste. And there was so much in the way of empire building going on. He was approached by other officers about becoming involved in a project for creating an Armed Forces Radio Network. A series of stations would be used to beam propaganda messages to our winning soldiers and to the losing Germans. At first Bob felt very comfortable with this idea, until he discovered that the real reason for the project was to provide the officer personnel with lifetime careers. In so many words, the promoters expressed the hope that the war would not proceed too quickly, so that they would have time to "sell" their idea to the top military brass and Congress. When Bob raised some questions about the advisability of keeping such a program going after the war he was immediately dropped from the project.

Around this same time, Bob was called upon to speak to a number of Special Services personnel. Using information from his Nashville Orientation lectures, his talk went over quite well. After that particular meeting, he and his roommate, Steinberg, had a very revealing conversation.

Steinberg asked Bob, "How long do you think the war will last?"

"Your guess is as good as mine. Actually I'm concerned with the Allied top command," Bob pointed out. "I don't really think they want to wind the fighting down. The men at the front are going through hell, but those at the rear never had it so good."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Steinberg.

"Let's consider morale," Bob said. "It's victory that boosts morale at the front. Americans aren't on the battlefield to promote their careers. But it seems like Americans behind the battle lines are doing just that. They think the whole reason for fighting is to make the officer cadre look good."

Steinberg shot back. "You better watch your mouth LeFevre. You tell that to the wrong officer and he's going to get you into grave digger command."

“Look. I’m not here to make a career for myself in the Army. And I didn’t think you were.”

“I’m not,” admitted Steinberg, “but I wouldn’t mind winning a promotion. Don’t try to kid yourself. So would you.”

“True enough,” Bob agreed. “But I’m not willing to win a promotion by brown-nosing. Sometimes it seems to me that this whole Special Services set up is politically inspired. It provides the career-minded brass with a chance to assure the folks back home that the men are actually enjoying Army life. They see movies. They get to see stage and screen personalities. They can play games. They can get mail. They can get an education. All the comforts of home.”

“You’ve convinced me, LeFevre.”

“Convinced you of what?”

“We’re going to win the war because we have more paper. The side that loses will be the side that runs out of paper first. Modern war is fought with memoranda.

“Anyhow,” Steinberg went on. “I just want you to know that your talk went over well. You’re going to have another chance to present it for some of the big boys.”

Shortly thereafter Bob was sent back to England. The Army Education Program had encountered difficulty in getting American text books shipped to Europe. Without the books, the program could hardly function. Bob’s orders were to scour England and locate a company that could print the books. The printing plates, being far less bulky than the books themselves, were in transit. When Bob found a suitable press that could handle the American plates he was to commandeer it for the Army.

Bob was wholly out of sympathy with this project. In England he was told that the English presses were not capable of handling American printing plates, unless extensive retooling was done. Bob didn’t care if the presses required retooling or not. This served as an excuse to dump the project and report back to his superiors that there were no suitable presses to be found in all of England. This resulted in the whole project being temporarily shelved, much to the dismay of Major Wilson and the higher ups. Without textbooks or the presses to print them, their plans were stymied.

Bob discussed this latest adventure of his in England with Steinberg. At one point in the discussion, Steinberg blurted out, “It seems to me, LeFevre, that you have set yourself up to thwart the wishes of your superior officers.”

Bob couldn’t deny it. Instead, he said, “Steinberg, do you believe in God?”

“Believe in God? How in the hell should I know?” He thought a minute.

“If there is one, he must be on vacation. No decent God would tolerate the kind of agony and destruction that goes on during any war.”

“I believe in God,” Bob said. “So?”

“People call God by different names. But I think there is one. And I’ll tell you how I set out my priorities. I serve God first. Or at least I try to. After that I serve my country. Then I take care of my family.”

“That’s all nice and neat, isn’t it?”

“It is to me.”

“Well I serve myself. When you’ve been in combat like I have, you better serve yourself. No one else will.”

Bob chuckled. “There goes one of the myths. Who was it that said: ‘There are no atheists in fox holes’?”

Steinberg stared back. “You’re nuts,” he said.

Bob laughed at himself. “That maybe so, but that’s the way I try to conduct myself in everything I do. My first question is: ‘Am I engaged in right action? Or is what I am doing wrong?’ To me, seizing British property, building up an educational empire in a foreign land, running up costs to the people back home needlessly, ... these things are wrong!”

“Didn’t you tell me you volunteered for the Army?” “Yes,” answered Bob. “I thought it was the right thing to do at the time.”

“Now what do you think?”

“I don’t think I’d do it again. I’ve made mistakes before and will make them again.”

“So what has God got to do with it?”

“Does that mean you don’t believe in God?”

“You got it right. I’m an atheist.”

Bob just clamped his mouth shut. What could he say?

“And what’s more,” Steinberg added, “every religious nut I’ve ever met is a phony. I’m beginning to think that’s what you are. A phony, LeFevre.”

Bob bristled at the thought that he was a phony. Ever since his “I Am” days he had tried to be self-disciplined and to do the “right” thing, to the best of his ability. That conversation with Steinberg sparked Bob into writing down his views of the war. In *Primer to a New World*, which was published after the war, Bob noted that people had been fighting over property and boundaries since the beginning of recorded history. But now they were organized as nation-states and the level of technology was much more dangerous. Bob was beginning to understand the role of his own teaching efforts in the Army. He now realized that propaganda was one of the methods used by governments and law-makers to make warfare acceptable to its citizenry. What stumped Bob was that if fighting among two individuals was evil and destructive, how could organized fighting on a national scale be right and proper? It was a question he couldn’t answer.

Meanwhile, new orders awaited Bob. He and a Captain Ryan were to make an inspection tour of eastern and southern France in order to locate hotels, spas, or resorts which could be used as rehabilitation centers for men who had been injured in combat. What LeFevre didn’t know was revealed in a conversation the two of them had near the end of their trip.

“You know what?” Ryan began. “I think you’re as sane as I am.”

“Probably not,” LeFevre responded jokingly. “The sooner the war ends for me the better.”

“As I said before,” Ryan repeated. “I think you’re perfectly sane. Nobody but a crazy man can really enjoy war.”

“Thanks for that,” Bob said. “I guess I get a little peeved with the empire builders I run into.”

“Who doesn’t? Most of them are phonies.”

“Funny you put it that way. My roommate back in Paris said he thought I was a phony when I told him I believed in God.”

This time Ryan laughed. “I told you, you’re not crazy. You don’t suspect a thing, do you?”

“Suspect?” Bob was suddenly on his guard. “What do you mean?”

“I’m not supposed to tell you this, but you’re okay. Some of your superiors thought you’d gone loco. You know, flipped. One of my assigned duties was to keep you under observation.”

Bob sighed. He wasn’t angry, just disgusted again. “Should we call the men in white coats?”

“Damn it to hell,” Ryan growled. “I think you’re a fine officer. And a good fellow. So you don’t drink. And you’ve got a weird diet. Its not as weird as Army rations. Do you have someone back in Paris gunning for you?”

“I can’t imagine who,” Bob said. “I haven’t hurt anyone. It is probably my big mouth. I have a tendency to say what’s on my mind. The truth hurts sometimes.”

“Got any advice for me, Ryan?”

“Not a word. Just keep on doing whatever you’ve been doing.”

Needless to say, Bob thought a great deal about his conversation with Ryan. How many people in Special Services thought he was going mad? Perhaps they were right.

“Is there such a thing as a man who is partly free? To be free, a man must be unrestrained in his choices and actions by all save his own wisdom and his own conscience. The minute we permit others to institute exterior restraint in any degree, we have deprived the individual of the right to practice self-control. Freedom is self-control, no more, no less.” June 30, 1958

Chapter 10 – Back Home With An Injured Back

Back in Paris in early 1945, Steinberg’s prediction came true. Bob was asked to prepare and deliver a lecture on the origins and meaning of Fascism to some of the top Army brass. When the hour of his lecture arrived, he found himself in a relatively small room with only a smattering of attendees. But the importance of the occasion was confirmed by rank. There were three generals, and a sprinkling of eagle colonels.

Bob began his talk by explaining that the fasces was a bundle of rods containing an ax with the blade projecting, and that it had taken on importance as a political symbol because in ancient times it had been borne before the Roman Senate. It represented the supreme authority in any political community.

In modern times, he told them, the fascist economy had originated with Mussolini, but had been picked up by Hitler. Fascism was the political and economic practice of having all production planned by the government and then imposed upon the owners of businesses. The fascists and national socialists didn’t shoot property owners and confiscate their property, as the communists under Lenin and Stalin had done. Rather, the owners of businesses were made junior partners with the government. The government made the meaningful decisions, collected taxes, and let the owners bear the burdens of any operating losses. In practice, both Germany and Italy made fascism work, at least in the short term, but it was accompanied by a profound loss of freedom to the business community and the people.

Bob noticed a certain amount of tension as he made his observations, but he went merrily on. After all, he was only reciting facts. They didn’t seem controversial. “Perhaps it will help you to envision the idea I’m attempting to communicate,” he said, “by looking at this ten-cent piece, the dime, minted in the U.S.” He dug into his pocket and managed to find one.

“As you will see, the U.S. Mint has used the fascist symbol as representative of the United States. The thirteen faggots bound together represents the strength of the federal union. The axe-head at one end represents the power of the nation, turned over to the chief executive and commander-in-chief. He can do as he pleases. That’s why the government can give total power to the Army. The Army acts with power coming from the government, put there by the people.”

Bob’s smile was indecipherable. He wanted to tell the truth, and by doing so, win approval. But he could see that the two-star general was squirming in his seat.

“I suppose,” Bob continued, “that politicians everywhere were simply doing what politicians always have to do, whether they are German, Italian, American, or Russian. They have to create the impression that the people are with them. Naturally, we know that Hitler is a dictator, and doesn’t really care whether the German people are with him or not, while in America we know the people approve of what their government does.”

The uneasiness continued among those in the audience, and Bob decided to cut his talk short. He couldn’t understand what he had said wrong.

That night in their room, Steinberg shook his head sadly as he regarded LeFevre. “Jesus, LeFevre. Did you ever drop the ball. You had it made. You were set for a promotion ‘til you gave that talk today. You’ll never get one now.”

“I know I did. But what in Sam Hill did I say wrong? Everything I said was true.”

“I really can’t figure you out,” Steinberg said. “All you had to do was tell those generals what they wanted to hear. You didn’t need to compare the government of the U. S. with Hitler, or Stalin to Mussolini.

“What I said was true,” Bob defended. “Besides I really didn’t do that.”

“God you’re dumb. That’s exactly what you said. Who cares about the truth? All you had to do was tell those bastards what great guys they were and everything would have been all right.”

“The fasces has been an American symbol since World War I. Our dimes still carry the impression.”

“Who gives a shit?”

“Well, I do.”

“I give up,” he said. “I’ve tried to help but you’re impossible. But I will give you one thing, you’ve got guts.”

“You’ll never understand me, Steinberg. It’s the truth I’m concerned with. The truth can’t hurt you, but combat actually scares me. You’re the one with the raw courage. Remember those infantry stories you told me?”

A few days later, new orders came through. Bob had done so well on the inspection tour with Ryan that he was ordered to move up to the front lines. The purpose was to make certain that the front line commanders and the men in the foxholes knew about the various phases of the Army’s education program.

When Steinberg learned of Bob’s departure on a second tour he snickered. They’d had a private joke about Bob’s return home. Bob had a feeling that his time was coming round. ‘Watch yourself, LeFevre. You may have been right. Maybe you’re going to be shipped back stateside.’ His inference was clear. Steinberg didn’t think Bob would live to see the United States again.

Bob’s immediate assignment was to tour several front line infantry companies in order to publicize the first phase of the Special Services education program. Both he and the company commanders he spoke with found it incredible that the Army brass could be concerned about such things as education while American soldiers were still fighting the Germans. Furthermore, they considered it ridiculous that these men might not be sent home after the war, either being transferred to the Pacific theater or left for police duty in France.

One night, while on this tour of duty, Bob had a meeting close to an area where fighting was taking place. Even though his chauffeur was familiar with the road, it had just been shelled, unbeknownst to either of them. Suddenly, as they were whizzing along, the jeep veered sharply to avoid a bomb crater. Just as it missed the first, it slammed into a second one. Bob had the momentary impression of the jeep going one way, and he another.

When he came to, Bob was flat on his back and his driver, a sergeant, was bending over him.

“Are you okay, Captain?”

It took Bob a moment to get his wits about him. “Sure. I was knocked out, I guess. Where’s my helmet? Is the jeep okay?” “The jeep’s fine, Captain. Here, let me help you.”

Bob started to rise and the pain shot through his body with such intensity that he almost passed out. Bob rolled over on his stomach and finally managed to get himself upon his hands and knees. The pain was fierce. His driver pulled the jeep over to where he was. With most of his weight on the sergeant, Bob just barely managed to get in.

“Sorry about that Cap,” the sergeant said. “I didn’t see that shell hole. We hit it at a right good clip.” The least jostle of the jeep brought shooting pains into Bob’s back, legs, and even his arms. When they finally reached Paris, Bob was still in pain. He hadn’t left the jeep once during the return trip. Fortunately, Steinberg was at their hotel, and he and the sergeant carried Bob upstairs. Bob couldn’t even stand without assistance.

Steinberg was skeptical. “What an act!” he said. “But you’re overdoing it a bit. I know what happened. You got drunk and fell off the wagon.”

“You’re right about that,” Bob said. “I got **THROWN** from the wagon.”

“No. Wait a minute. I know what your problem is!” Steinberg nodded in a display of wisdom. “You threw your back out humping all the French gals near the front lines. Boy, do I envy you.”

All Bob could do was glare. Neither comment seemed very funny to him.

The next morning, Bob couldn't lift himself off the bed. Steinberg went for help, and the next thing Bob knew was that he was being rolled, amid great pain, onto a stretcher and carried into an ambulance. Presently he found himself in a hospital being examined by an American Army doctor. He could give no statement of what was wrong, other than to agree Bob had sustained a serious injury. Bob was administered a pain killer and soon fell asleep.

Several hours later, he came out of his deep slumber with a feeling of apprehension. Something was vitally wrong. He didn't know what. Was he going to have one of his strange spells? Bob barely had the strength to turn his bed light on to summon the nurse. His head was expanding and he felt as if he stood at the brink of a huge pit. He blacked out.

When he regained consciousness, he was stripped naked and three doctors were working over him.

One of the doctors sighed in relief. "He's with us again." Everything came into focus. "What is it, Doc?"

"Frankly, I don't know. Whatever it is, we aren't equipped to handle it here."

"What does that mean?"

"We're going to ship you back to the states. You'll be going home."

By the time Bob's flight back to the states had been arranged in March, 1945, he was feeling a little bit better. He had become ambulatory, but his back felt strange and he walked gingerly, a step at a time. He was constantly apprehensive of shooting pain, and when it did come, he had no words to describe its intensity. His back was crooked and his torso jogged to the left about three inches. He was flown to Richmond, Virginia and lodged at McGuire General Hospital, where the Army specialized in treating back problems.

The doctors at McGuire found that Bob had a ruptured disc between the third and fourth lumbar vertebra. Bob's disc was in thirteen pieces and it no longer was performing the function for which nature had designed it. Instead of acting as a cushion between each vertebra, the broken cartilage was aggravating his entire spine.

An operation was in order. Captain Morgan, the chief surgeon, explained the situation to Bob. The Army was still experimenting on the best surgical procedure when it came to discs. In some cases they removed all of the broken disc; in other cases they only removed the smaller pieces, in hopes that the main portion would regrow. In Bob's case, they would take out twelve, small, broken portions of the disc and leave the large piece in place. That way it might have a chance to restore itself.

The operation was performed without any complications, and Bob entered into a long phase of recuperation. He was disheartened, for he was still crooked, and couldn't walk straight. Although Bob could walk, the operation hadn't seemed to improve his situation very much.

By late June, 1945, Bob was discharged from McGuire. However, officially he was still hospitalized and classified as an "outpatient." The Army had twelve "out-patient" centers around the country, and Bob was allowed to select one of his choice, where he would continue to be treated until such time as he was completely healed.

Bob consulted with Loy. She had come down from Baltimore to be with him throughout his operation. They agreed that they would like to live on the west coast. If that were the case, Loy's mother and sister were anxious to accompany them out west. So Bob chose to be treated at the Army hospital at Santa Ana. They could take up residence in San Francisco, and he could commute to Santa Ana once a month until he was released from Army care. He knew that his sales licenses were still in force with Inter-City Company. If Loy's mother sold her home in Baltimore, Bob promised to get her into a small business, such as a guest house or rooming house in San Francisco.

On July 5, 1945 they departed from Baltimore. Loy had never been west of Minnesota. Mrs. Reuling and Lorna, Loy's sister, had never been west of the Alleghenies. Motoring from Atlantic to Pacific in those post-war days consumed practically a full week. Bob acted as a seasoned tour director. Loy was most enchanted with Colorado, but Bob insisted that San Francisco remain their destination. After all, that was where he hoped to find his friends, and work.

Fred Weiss welcomed him back with open arms. Inter-City had done well during the war years and his job was still available. Bob and Loy rented an apartment on Washington Street, through Weiss, and it didn't take Bob long to locate a guest house on Jackson Street that Loy's mother and sister could lease and operate.

Probably the most important personal event that occurred during those early days of returning to San Francisco was Loy's introduction to "the gang." Bob had contacted Ethel Dazey by telephone shortly after his arrival. She at once had organized a kind of reception party, so Bob could introduce Loy and at the same time have a get together with his friends of the "I Am" days.

The really surprising news from Ethel concerned Pearl's marriage. As Bob knew, Sidney had married Peggy, leaving Pearl a single woman. Pearl had found out about his marriage to Loy, and within a few months, she and Jerry Dorris, another member of the "I Am" group, had exchanged marriage vows and were now living in Santa Rosa. This relieved Bob a great deal. He knew that he had jilted Pearl, but with her safely remarried, he was off the hook, and hoped that they could remain friends.

Bob was overjoyed to see his old friends when he and Loy entered the Dazey apartment on Russian Hill. Neither Pearl nor Jerry were present; nor were Peggy and Sidney. But nearly all the others with whom he had been close were at hand. Loy met Ethel Dazey, and the rest of her family, including her daughters, Carol and Ruth, and their cousin Kathleen Blarney. Also present were Edith Shank, Agnes (Sunny) Widell, and Nora and Tom Laidlaw.

Loy carried herself well. She endeared herself to everyone, when later that evening, she sang a few songs a capella. Those absolutely gorgeous notes which poured from her throat insured her acceptance by Bob's old friends. Even though she had no interest in metaphysics, she knew she had been made welcome.

It was after Loy's singing that Ethel dropped the bomb. "Would Bob consider trying to contact Saint Germain?" she asked. Bob should have anticipated such a request and worked to have headed it off. On the spur of the moment, Bob thought up a marvelous out. Most of those so-called dictation had occurred only with Pearl present. So Bob reminded everybody that without Pearl no such attempt could even be tried.

His old "I Am" friends greeted this with disappointment. And this brought Bob face to face with a question he had occasionally asked himself. Were these people friendly because they liked him as a person, or because he was an odd-ball with metaphysical proclivities? As the gathering broke up, Ethel assured everyone that they would have more meetings at a later time, and that doubtless Pearl and Jerry could be induced to be at the next assembly. Sooner or later Bob and Pearl were bound to meet. What would he say to her? What would her attitude be?

“Let us no longer beguile ourselves with the fabulous idea that wishing for riches will provide us with happiness. Happiness must be earned. Let us orient our lives, not to our wishbones, but to our backbones. Once we are so geared, we will understand that happiness is the result of self-discipline and work and comes through no other portals.”
January 5, 1959

Chapter 11 – Post-War San Francisco

To Bob, four years in the service seemed like a time of suspended animation. He had made the assumption that his country came first, and he had been entirely sincere in his patriotic devotion, but he also realized that the Army had made it possible for him to break out of his confining relationship with Pearl. The Army experience had certainly changed him. He was beginning to understand that there was more to America than just the United States government. Sometimes his patriotism and the demands of the Army were at odds. Which was the higher value and how was he to know, he wondered? For the present, however, he had to postpone these questions in order to look after himself.

Back at Inter-City during the summer of 1945, nothing seemed to work fast enough. To increase his earnings, Bob had decided to expand his role from that of a commission agent to that of property owner, as well. Bob had located a piece of property on the Great Highway, that fronted on the Pacific Ocean. It was exactly what he had been looking for, and he hoped to buy it without having to put up any money of his own. He couldn't buy it otherwise, for he didn't have the money to use as a down payment.

When Bob drove Loy out to see the building, she was dismayed. He could hardly blame her. The architects had not had beauty in mind when they had designed the building. It was the ugliest thing on the coast in the Sunset district. The exterior was stuccoed and it had been hit by wind, rain, and salt air for years. Everything about the building was rectangular, rusty, and gray.

The property was owned by an elderly widow, known as Old Lady Grant. She had made money on this apartment building by operating it frugally. Government price and rent controls had tied her hands. She couldn't afford to make improvements or repairs, even if she had wanted to. She couldn't raise rents because they were frozen by the Office of Price Administration. (OPA). So as prices rose and her costs increased, she saw to it that her services declined, leaving her in the profit column. Otherwise, she explained, she'd be better off to burn the building.

The rents throughout the building were unbelievably low. There were fourteen living units, and when the building was full it netted about \$250 a month. Mrs. Grant wanted \$50,000 for the whole package, and was willing to accept \$5,000 as the down payment. Bob thought the building would easily generate enough income to pay for itself and talked to Fred Weiss about where he might find that kind of money for a downpayment.

Weiss had an idea. A woman named !Caroline Gray was a good friend of his, and was often called upon to help with financing business opportunities. She was known affectionately as “Ma” Gray. She didn't put up the money herself, but made a business of co-signing notes, because her credit was good. She usually did business with a lending company, called The Morris Plan. They would take a second mortgage on the property and obtain “Ma” Gray's guarantee of the loan. “Ma” would receive a fee for acting as guarantor or co-signer. She lovingly referred to that as her “pound of flesh.” In the event of default, she was prepared to assume the mortgage and take over the property to make it pay. She was a gambler, who accepted pay up front for risk-taking.

Weiss' idea was that LeFevre would borrow \$ 5000 from the Morris Plan Company. This would cover the downpayment on the Great Highway property. Weiss convinced “Ma” Gray to defer her “up front” fee, as a favor to him, if LeFevre would pay “Ma” an additional \$ 5000 during the life of the mortgage. LeFevre would make payments to Old Lady Grant on the property mortgage, as well as to the Morris Plan on the note.

This appeared to be a splendid plan. Where else could he buy a \$ 50,000 building without any

money of his own? The transaction was completed, and he and Loy became the new owners of record. Laws on the books at that time made it impossible to evict tenants unless there was legal cause, but as luck would have it, a tenant moved out, and Bob and Loy moved into their own building.

While this transaction was taking place, Bob had remained in the Army rehabilitation program. This entailed a drive to Southern California at least once a month for examination and physical therapy. Bob had already concluded that he wanted nothing more to do with the Army, and his attitude had been reinforced by an episode he watched one day while driving toward the Santa Ana Army Hospital.

A police cruiser with siren going, approached and passed his car. A few moments later, a private passenger car, headed the same direction, overtook him, as though it were pursuing the police. A bit farther down the road, Bob overtook both vehicles, which were stopped. The civilian had forced the police vehicle to the side of the road and two policemen were in their car listening to the civilian. Bob stopped to see if he could be of assistance, and to inquire the reason for the breakneck speed.

Bob didn't have to ask. He could tell from the conversation. The civilian was an ordinary businessman, but he was dressing the police down. "You fellows could have killed me, passing me at such a speed back there!"

Bob heard the officer at the wheel say, "Just who are you, anyway?"

The officer probably expected their tormentor to be some politician, but the civilian's response came sharp and clear.

"Who am I?" he bellowed. "I'm a taxpayer, that's who! And don't you ever forget it."

Both officers looked dumbly at each other.

The phrase haunted him, "I'm a taxpayer, that's who! And don't you forget it!" At least one citizen was willing to stand up for his rights.

Shortly thereafter, Ethel hosted another meeting of the faithful. This time Pearl and her husband, Jerry, were present. Everyone's major interest was in having a "dictation." Could such an event occur? The requirement of having Pearl on hand had been met.

Bob could have refused, but Pearl was her usual persuasive self. And Bob himself remained curious as to whether he could still achieve the mental state necessary to have the mysterious dictations. Bob sat facing Pearl, and with no difficulty climbed the stairs of his mind and blanked out. When he "came back," he found that a "dictation" had ensued, though he had no recollection of it whatsoever.

Loy was fascinated by what had occurred, but she was also extremely uneasy. Her anxiety was heightened when she saw Bob return Pearl's inquisitive gazes. Who could blame her? Even Jerry was disturbed by the attention Pearl was giving Bob.

Later Ethel asked Loy to sing. Loy chose a ballad whose words were clear and poignant. The song let everyone know that her claim to Bob was final and that she had no intention of playing a secondary role to some former confidant and would-be lover. She also reinforced that with Bob in private after the party.

But Bob had little to worry about. Pearl was in Santa Rosa and easy to avoid. Besides, he had more important matters to worry about than Pearl and dictations. He was still concerned about earning a living, and soon another dimension was added to his life with Loy. His two sons, Robbie and Dave, began visiting them on a regular basis. They lived with Sidney and Peggy, who resided in San Rafael, only a few miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge.

About this time, Bob formed plans for adding an apartment on the ground floor of his apartment building, whose front door was only a few yards from the Pacific Ocean. To avoid seepage from seawater, the basement had been constructed above ground, converting what had been intended as a three story structure with basement into one that stood four stories high.

With plans in hand, Bob went to the San Francisco City Hall to obtain a building permit so that construction could begin. The clerk in charge of issuing building permits greeted Bob cordially and checked the plat book on the location to make sure that no zoning regulations would be violated.

After checking for a few minutes, he came back to Bob and said, "I can't issue you a permit, Mr. LeFevre."

Bob was astonished. "Why not?" he asked.

"You have misrepresented the building you are in. Your building is a three story building. The area is zoned for three stories. You're trying to add on a fourth story. That's against the law."

"That's not so. The building I have is four stories."

"No. Your building is three stories high. It says so right here." Bob looked at the original building permit. It called for the

erection of a three story building with a full basement.

The clerk pointed out, "Mr. LeFevre, you must be counting that basement as the fourth floor, aren't you?"

"What you are calling the basement, then is entirely above ground. It's the first floor to me. Very well. Then I want to put an apartment in the basement."

"That is not permitted. It must be above ground."

"It is above ground."

"Well, then it can't be a basement, can it? If the basement is above ground, I can't give you a permit, Sir."

Bob recalled that courageous civilian in Santa Ana, who had given the police a dressing down. "Now just one minute. I am doing nothing wrong. The papers are full of information about how there's a housing shortage. The price controls have prevented the building of new units.

"What I'm doing can help take care of that need. It's patriotic. It's what's needed. And if I don't do it, the fire marshall will probably be out there and condemn the building.

"I don't know who I have to see or what I have to do, but I'm going to put in that apartment. What do you think of that?"

The clerk laughed. Then he leaned in Bob's direction and whispered. "I don't blame you a damn bit. These laws are silly. But rules are rules.

"But I tell you what. Why don't you go ahead and build it without a permit? Nobody has to know. Nobody is going to interfere. But I'd get in trouble if I issued a permit."

Bob thought a moment. He really didn't care about the permit one way or the other. "I just want to be allowed to do the right thing in respect to my own property."

"Then go ahead," the clerk said. They shook hands and Bob left happy.

Bob hired a carpenter and arranged for all the necessary work to begin. More than half of the work was completed when Loy phoned him at Inter-City one day. Something had gone wrong. The construction people had packed up and gone home when some stranger had appeared and condemned the new ground floor apartment that was being built.

Bob rushed home and found that he was in flagrant violation of the building code on thirteen different counts. The lack of a building permit was only the beginning. The building itself was non-conforming. That would have to be corrected. The new apartment did not have the prescribed ceiling height. It was short by one inch. The wrong windows and wiring had been used. A new door was hinged on the wrong side; some of the fixtures that had been used didn't meet code requirements.

The big problem was that the building could only have three floors above ground. A skylight and central stairwell would have to be replaced. The furnaces must be repaired. And finally the building did not have a "dry standpipe."

LeFevre choked at this. The following day he was back at City Hall to see what could be done. He discovered that a review board met each week, and that he would be able to present his problems there.

For six consecutive weeks, Bob attended the review board meetings before finally getting some sort of compromise action. The clerk was called before the board, but he denied ever having seen LeFevre. And as for telling a person he could go ahead without a permit, he thought the man who made such an allegation must be a nut.

At the end of the six weeks, one of the city officials took him aside. When no one was looking, he said, "I figure you've had your lesson, LeFevre."

“What does that mean?”

“It means in this city if you want to get ahead, you have to play the game.”

“Look, I’m a peaceful citizen and a war veteran. I’m not trying to hurt anyone. What I’m trying to do is constructive. I’m even doing it with my own money. What game am I missing?”

“We won’t discuss that. If you agree to do certain things with your building, I think the board will grant you a permit.”

“I’ve told you from the beginning that I’m willing to do anything within reason. Taking the building down or elevating it isn’t reasonable. But I’ll be happy to do whatever else I can.”

“First you’ll have to tear out that new apartment and lower the cement floor by one inch, so you have the proper ceiling height. The other apartments can stay, since you had nothing to do with them. But the one you’re building must be right.”

Bob looked quizzical. “You mean that same height in those old apartments won’t hurt anything?”

“You got it, but it’s got to be right in new construction or we can’t give you the permit.”

“Whatever you say. What else?”

“The furnaces and the roof will have to be fixed. The dry stand pipe will have to be added on and a few other minor things. We’re going to describe your building as ‘non-conforming’ and allow it to go at that. You’ll have a building that is actually four stories high that we will classify as a three-story non-conforming structure.”

The cash register in Bob’s mind was ringing bells as it added up these improvements. “And if I agree to do all these things, what happens?”

“Well, then there’s a fine for building without a permit.”

“Ye, Gods!” Bob said. “What you are asking me to do is going to cost over \$10,000. And you want to fine me on top of that?”

“Well?” For the first time the official seemed a trifle unsure of himself. “I really can’t say just how much the fine might be. But it’s possible we might waive the fine, you being a veteran and all that.”

“I’d sure be happy about that,” Bob admitted.

He leaped on the remark. “Would you say that we had done you a favor? And that one good favor deserves another?”

What could he mean? Bob nodded. “Well, sure. I always try to show my gratitude. What are you getting at? Are you asking me for money?”

“No. No. Not for a minute. That would be a bribe.” “What do you have in mind then?”

“Well, LeFevre, I figure about two cases of scotch would be about right. You see, I’m not alone in this and we’d have to cover all the bases.”

“I see.”

“Very well,” he sighed. “We’ll say nothing more. Your permit will arrive in a day or so.”

True to the official’s word, the permit did arrive. The construction crew was called back to work and a jack-hammer operator removed the floor so a new slab could be poured. The rest of the work was completed and Bob even had the building painted inside and out. When the work was finished, Bob thought of that review board official. In all the excitement he had never sent the scotch.

This did not end Bob’s problems with the bureaucrats in San Francisco. Soon after he had returned to San Francisco, he realized that he would not be in the city for an election later that fall. The newspaper explained that absentee ballots would be available for people who would be out of the city. Bob went down to the office of the Registrar of Voters and explained that he was a salesman and would be down in Monterey closing a deal the day of the election. He also added that he was a veteran and that the last time he had voted by absentee ballot was when he had been in France.

The clerk nodded in understanding. Then he said, “I presume you are now living at the same address?”

“No,” Bob said. “I’ve moved to a new address. We might as well make that change while I’m here.”

In sudden anger, the clerk snatched away the ballot he had given Bob. "You were about to commit a felony," he shouted at Bob. "Don't you know it's against the law to pose as the resident of one address while living at another?"

In the stillness, that followed that outburst, Bob got a hold on himself. "Listen to what I have to say," he finally told the clerk. "I have done nothing wrong. Don't you dare refer to me as a felon. When I went into the Army, I gave up that address. I spent four years away from home and voted whenever an election was held. I intend to do that now."

"No, you're not," growled the clerk.

"I will, even if I have to go over your head. I'm going to see the Mayor right now."

Bob stormed out of the Registrar's office and headed for the Mayor's office. The Mayor's administrative assistant sat at his desk. "My name is Robert LeFevre. I have just had my right to vote denied me by the Registrar's clerk. I wish to see the Mayor."

The assistant consulted the Mayor's appointment book and looked up. "The Mayor can see you next Tuesday morning."

"That won't do at all. I want to see him now. I am a peaceful and law-abiding citizen. That clerk called me a felon, which is something I cannot tolerate. I am going to see the Mayor. Now! Or I am going to kick in the door to the Mayor's office. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, of course. I can see that you're upset. Just wait a minute." Bob looked around and could see that he had created quite a sensation among the others waiting to see the Mayor.

Within a few minutes, the Mayor's assistant returned and ushered him into the Mayor's presence.

LeFevre went through the story once more. "I intend to vote," he told the Mayor. "I hope to do it peacefully. I want you to see to it that I can. Now if you can't, let me spell out what I propose to do.

"First, I shall summon the newspapers and explain the situation and give them time to get their reporters and cameramen over here. Then I'm going back to the Registrar's office. There I will vote, even if it means manhandling the clerk. If I must, I will make a shambles out of that office. You have my word on it. I WILL VOTE! Is that understood?"

A smile came over the Mayor's face while listening to LeFevre. "You appear to be a determined man."

"Appearances in this case are not deceiving you. I'm angry and intend to vote. I prefer to be peaceful about it but I'll create a scene if necessary."

The Mayor didn't flinch. "You do understand the law, don't you? We don't want people voting more than once."

"I'm not trying to vote more than once. Once will be enough."

Finally the Mayor said, "Mr. LeFevre, this looks like a problem for the City Council and we're fortunate they're in session. Let me take you there to discuss this with the councilmen."

Apparently the Mayor had been planning to address the Council anyhow, for it seemed he was expected. LeFevre, however, was an unexpected guest. "Gentlemen," the Mayor said, "I have brought one of our citizens to this meeting because I want you to hear from him in person. He has a complaint and I'll let him explain it to you himself."

Bob repeated the story for a second time and ended with his threat to bring in the press if he were denied the right to vote.

A few of the councilmen exchanged smiles. There were some hurried whisperings among the Mayor and the city representatives. Finally he looked up and said to Bob, "We can't change the law about residency requirements. But we do believe that your intention is only to vote once. So here is what you do. Wait fifteen minutes. The clerk in the Registrar's office will go out to lunch and someone else will be on duty. You go back there and don't say anything about your address. Just cast your ballot as you intended all along. You can make your address change at some later time. Will that be all right?"

"It's fine with me, if it's fine with you," Bob said. "I'm not interested in technicalities. All I want to do is vote."

"Then do it." The Mayor waved his hands and dismissed Bob.

He waited the prescribed quarter hour and voted, saying nothing about his address. Of course, there was no further difficulty.

The year 1945 drew to a close. The doctors at the Army hospital in Santa Ana thought Bob was fully recovered. Bob was honorably discharged from the Army on December 10th.

As 1946 dawned, Bob's first concern was to increase his income and expand his money-making activities. One of the first requirements of a good father and husband was to provide an income. In trying to come closer to his boys and Loy, his obsession to earn was reinforced.

Two ideas formed. He had finally straightened out affairs at the Great Highway apartment building, so why not buy another? Secondly, instead of working as a licensed salesman with Fred Weiss, why not become a broker himself? As a broker he would make full commissions and write his own deals.

Bob's first move was to find another property to buy and operate. This time he looked for a small hotel in the central business district. Luck was with him. He found that the owners of the Ormond Hotel on Eddy Street wished to sell. The property looked like a winner and Bob was sure that he could arrange to buy it lock, stock, and barrel for under \$100,000. An inspection of the property turned up nothing more critical than that the basement was a wreck. It looked as if a bomb had exploded. But the hotel was still considerably underpriced. It had everything Bob wanted. A kitchen and restaurant could be operated out of the basement once it was cleaned up. It had a place for his real estate office. In short, it looked like the perfect deal for him and he completed the transaction with assistance from "Ma" Gray.

Another property that Bob looked over was a leasehold on Clay Street, which operated as a guest house. The owner wanted out quickly and needed no cash at all. That was Bob's kind of deal, so he took that over as well. When it came to managing the guest house, Bob was in a quandary. Loy was managing the Great Highway property, and he was at the Ormond. Pearl volunteered to take over responsibilities at Clay Street. She received help from Edith Shank and Blanche Chapell, two of her "I Am" comrades. Bob was pleased that from the very beginning the "Henry Clay" showed a profit.

Meanwhile Loy announced her pregnancy. The year was progressing rapidly.

"LeFevre Investments", the real estate and business opportunities arm of his business, and "LeFevre Enterprises", his guest house and hotel properties, were expanding. He hired three salesmen to sell real estate and work business opportunities, and Ruth Dazey, the youngest of Ethel's children, became his secretary. She had been out of school only a few years and had been working at the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. She was a serious and studious girl, with a passion for perfection, and a devout interest in metaphysics, like her mother.

Jim Rogers, from Bob's "I Am" days, showed up and went to work as one of his real estate salesmen. Edith Shank helped with his bookkeeping. The exacting mental and physical discipline demanded by the Ballards made these former "I Am" people excellent employees.

Bob now had time to direct his attention to the Ormond Hotel. He renamed it "The Jefferson," and completely remodeled it. In the process, he spent nearly as much money in creating the "new" Jefferson as he had spent in acquiring the original property. He was able to borrow funds, as by now his credit was excellent. The basement was cleaned and designs were drawn for a fine restaurant. All health, fire, and safety regulations were met. When the restaurant was completed, it was named "The Patriots," and was crowned with a colorful sign depicting the flag raising at Iwo Jima. Bob had said nothing to his teetotaling friends about his intention to sell alcoholic beverages in "The Patriots." His plan was to apply for the liquor license at the last minute, so that their objections would not forestall him. He did this, but his application for the permit was turned down. Years before a business at that same location had served as the nucleus for "undesirables." By design, no new licenses were issued for a several square block area in that part of downtown San Francisco, and there was no hope of getting any sort of exception. Had Bob asked the sellers before he purchased the hotel, or made inquiry at City Hall, he would have discovered why there were no liquor establishments in the general area. And he had been lax in failing to inquire as to the reason the basement of the hotel had been such a wreck. It was the ancient vestige of the work of those "undesirables."

Already Bob had two strikes against him, when the officials of the restaurant union appeared on the scene. He realized that he had made a poor decision about spending the money to open the restaurant without having made adequate investigation. Now the union demanded that he hire eleven people to staff the restaurant. Bob had figured on three employees. The last thing he wanted to happen was to publicize his anti-union encounters in Minnesota, so he capitulated without a protest.

“The Patriots” opened but “white elephant” would have been a more appropriate name. It simply couldn’t support itself.

Although Bob had managed not to antagonize the union, he did rub the Health Department the wrong way. One day while planning meals with the chef, Bob noticed a man who simply finished his meal, got up and left the restaurant without stopping to pay his check. He asked the waitress what was going on.

The waitress explained that the man was a health inspector and readily acknowledged that she had not given him a check. She said that since the inspectors had the power to close an eating establishment for infractions of the city health code, they were treated royally, and given free meals wherever they went. Nevertheless, LeFevre insisted that the inspector start paying for his meals.

A week later the Health Department tried to close down “The Patriots.” The inspector was angry that he had lost his free meals, and when he saw a waitress picking a leaf of lettuce from the floor, he called it “wading in the food” and wrote up a citation. When Bob protested, “The Patriots” was placed on probation instead of being closed.

A few days later, Bob saw a city workman posting a notice on the restaurant doors. This time, Bob discovered that the complaint against “The Patriots” came from the Fire Marshal’s office. He and his attorney met the Fire Marshal and it was explained that he had failed to post a sign which showed the total number of persons allowed in the establishment at one time.

Bob said, “I’ve never heard of that regulation before. The fire inspector was down at the restaurant several times before we opened and never spoke to us about it.”

“Well ignorance of the law is no excuse,” said the Fire Marshal. “Here’s what you’ll need and you better get it quick before we shut you down.”

So Bob went out and had the sign prepared according to the specifications given to him. It was hung the next day.

But the harassment continued. The city workmen reappeared a few days later with a new complaint: the required occupancy sign was not on the premises. Bob rushed to the Fire Marshal’s office. The Marshal informed him that the regulation, written after the Great Fire of 1906, required that the sign be made of fireproof material. Bob’s had been made out of cardboard.

“Well why wasn’t I told of this before?” Bob was told he hadn’t asked.

“Well what should I make my sign from?”

“Bronze,” the Fire Marshall replied. “It’s fireproof. Sheet metal would only be fire resistant.”

Bob could only find one firm in the city which made bronze signs, and he ordered one. It cost more than \$ 500. By furnishing the Marshal’s office proof that it was on order, “The Patriots” was allowed to remain open. Later on his attorney informed him that the firm which made the bronze sign was owned by a relative of the Mayor.

“In the end there is but one device which can be relied upon to put government into its proper place. The device is within the grasp of every human being. The tool is his own mind and will, his own determination NOT to rely upon the government for anything at all.” July 25, 1959

Chapter 12 – The San Francisco Group and More Financial Troubles

On January 12, 1947, Loy gave birth to their son, Thomas. However, Bob’s preoccupation with family life was overshadowed by his business problems. Bob was unable to make The Jefferson or its restaurant profitable. His financial situation was getting more and more desperate each passing day. Closing the operation would have meant waving good-bye to a \$100,000 investment, and Bob couldn’t bring himself to do that. So he used the profits from his other businesses to keep The Jefferson and “The Patriots” afloat. Instead of making headway, his operations were continually losing ground.

A number of business opportunities now opened up, and Bob found that these could be used to bolster his failing position. He sold one of his properties and a guest house lease, using the proceeds to pay off bills at The Jefferson and “The Patriots.” This gave him a bit of breathing room. Then he heard of another hotel, the Glenburn, only a few blocks from The Jefferson. He arranged to take a year’s lease at \$1200 per month and figured he could clear about \$500 a month. Then the Majestic, another small hotel at Sutter and Gough Streets, came on the market. The owners wanted out quickly and didn’t need any cash up front. So Bob took over the Majestic with no money down, and agreed to pay the prior owners the same price they had originally paid, but over a period of months. Pearl and her “I Am” friends again stepped to save the day and managed these properties. His friend from England, Marjorie Llewellyn, also became involved in his projects, as Bob had sponsored her immigration from England in September, 1947.

Looking at his own bureaucratic run-ins and experiences, Bob realized that something was wrong with the business climate in the Bay area. He knew of the rent strike started by a Marxist student at Mrs. Reuling’s guest house in Berkeley. He, himself, had been put into a bind by both government and union intrusion. The more he thought about it, the more he realized that if the city government had not turned down his request for a liquor license, and if the union had not forced him to hire so many people, he would probably have been the owner of a successful restaurant at The Jefferson. He hadn’t really believed it possible, at the outset of his business career, that the government and union could cost him many thousands of dollars in unnecessary operating expenditures.

Mr. Ballard had once told him that people had the right to use their own property in any way they saw fit, so long as they did not physically harm another. The Health Department, the Fire Department and even the unions were preventing him from running his businesses in an intelligent manner. What had happened to the “freedom” in free enterprise? Why was he, a loyal and patriotic veteran and taxpayer, being denied the right to use his own property in a peaceful manner?

When Bob began questioning the possibility of a “communist threat” to American business, he was told, off the record, that this nation was suffering from similar problems coast to coast. Communists, as the Ballards predicted, had infiltrated the government and were casting a malevolent spell on the “American way of life.”

To increase his awareness and knowledge of the problem, Bob began reading books about the communist conspiracy. He knew little about communism, and was eager to learn more. He knew he was ignorant, but he certainly remembered when the Office of Price Administration had been created by the government as a war measure with the promise it would be disbanded once the war was ended. The war had ended, yet price controls were still in effect.

Bob decided to write a letter to his Congressman. He reminded his official representative in Washington that the Office of Price Administration was a holdover from the war and should be

eliminated. Would his Congressman please move as quickly as possible to get it done?

A few weeks later Bob got a personal letter from his Congressman, and he could hardly believe what it said. The Congressman revealed that he had no intention of helping to get rid of the OPA, because, as he saw it, there were people just like Bob who were landlords. If the OPA were abandoned, “the little man” would be “gouged.” Bob suddenly realized that instead of working to get rid of such an agency, his “representative” in Washington was working to broaden and extend its powers.

Bob now was beginning to realize that his Congressman, a Democrat, was just one of hundreds who were actually loyal to communist ideals and doing their best to make it better for “the little guy.” The letter motivated Bob to learn more about the original aims and ideals of the founders of this country. Had what he taught in the Army been fact or fancy?

Based on the teachings of his mother and the “I Am” movement, Bob was sure that this country needed to return to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. He believed that under those documents, each American had the right to try to succeed. Success wasn’t guaranteed, and many would fail, but at least each could try, and what they made would be theirs. If they didn’t make it, no one was obligated to lift them up or help them succeed. Bob had been raised in a household where this was taught, and he believed it. It seemed to Bob that since Franklin Roosevelt’s first administration, taxation had been used, not as a device to pay the costs of government, but as a means of redistributing income. This was one of the central ideas of communism, as he came to understand it.

To help explore these ideas, Bob decided to place an ad in the San Francisco papers calling for a public meeting. If enough people came, he planned to organize a group for the purpose of studying economic and political issues, and for writing letters to Congressmen urging them to support the “American way of life.” There was already a nucleus of interested people in The San Francisco Group, the official title of a group organized by Pearl and Ethel. Its purpose was to study metaphysical ideas and provide a place and forum for discussion. Forty people showed up in response to Bob’s advertisements. The group was dubbed “The People’s Unofficial Committee” because everyone present was fed up with officialdom and bureaucrats.

Meanwhile Bob was working himself towards a nervous breakdown. He was becoming desperate for money to meet his obligations. When his yearly tax bills came in, he nearly hit the roof. His efforts at improving The Jefferson had cost him well over \$100,000 and had appreciably enhanced its value and those of adjoining properties in the neighborhood. Bob was rewarded by the Assessor’s office with a substantial boost in his real estate taxes. His protest was to no avail, and it dawned on him that if every property owner was to be penalized for improving what he owned, there would be little incentive to improve.

Bob saw only one thing to do. He realized that he had to sell off everything he owned, except The Jefferson, and use the money to reduce his debts. He proceeded to sell his former home on Clay Street, and the Glenburn and Majestic leases. The Jefferson now constituted Bob’s major asset and liability. Thanks to the losses accruing at “The Patriots” Bob’s net worth was about \$ 50,000. This was decidedly smaller than what it had been, but Bob consoled himself. After all, he had started out with nothing when he got out of the service.

Even with all his eggs consolidated into one basket, Bob saw things going downhill. He became increasingly desperate, and decided to sell The Jefferson, too. He could survive nicely on his net from such a sale, and spend his time assimilating all the strange, new ideas he had been reading about. He even considered getting into politics.

His ad for the sale of The Jefferson elicited little response, so he changed the ad, offering to trade his equity for some smaller property with a like net worth. Again, he came up empty-handed. Then one Sunday, in late 1948, Loy saw an ad in The *Examiner*, put there by a party living in Southern California. They had a Beverly Hills home, formerly owned by a famous movie star and wanted to trade their equity for an equity in a San Francisco business.

That seemed made to order. While Bob didn’t want a piece of Los Angeles real estate, perhaps

The San Francisco Group would be interested? It had succeeded in attracting a number of new members. If the building compared to the Reading Room Bob had started in St. Paul, maybe it could serve as a focal point for the Group's activities. Meanwhile, he and Loy could live in it, while he became more active in public affairs.

The property, known as Falcon Lair, was owned by "Gypsy" and Gerald Buys. It had been the famous residence of Rudolph Valentino, constructed as a gift for his enamored, Natasha Rambova. "Gypsy" sang the praises of the location at # 2 Bella Drive, which consisted of a mansion and three acres in Benedict Canyon. It commanded a gorgeous view which would extend to Catalina Island "on a clear day." The Buys had expected to open a night club, but had been denied a liquor license by the City Council.

Bob was eager to do anything that might enable him to dispose of The Jefferson and thereby give him time to think and reorganize his life. So he prepared an offer to exchange equities with the Buys, basing it on the information they had disclosed. He gave the Buys a full two weeks to examine The Jefferson and approve of the trade. Several days later, the Buys appeared to inspect the property. Bob showed them everything and they said he would hear from them shortly. Within a day or so, Gerald Buys phoned to say that the deal was off.

So Bob seemed to be back at square one. He now approached Pearl with a new idea. Perhaps The San Francisco Group would be willing to accept his \$ 50,000 equity in The Jefferson as an endowment? Bob would be willing to turn his assets over to the Group, but they would have to be willing to assume and service his liabilities. If Pearl were willing to step in and exercise her considerable managerial skills and bring in some of the Group's members as employees, she had a reasonable chance of succeeding.

Pearl was dubious. This would be far more of an undertaking than she had ever attempted. Some of the Group were doubtful, but in the end, Bob's wishes prevailed. With gratitude, Bob drew up the necessary papers, and the property passed to the Group on January 3, 1949. He and Loy and their infant son, Tom, were invited to spend a few days at Pearl's ranch in Santa Rosa after The Jefferson had been transferred to The San Francisco Group.

Being out in the country brought about a much needed sense of peace for Bob. He had been truly exhausted and had practically lost the ability to concentrate on anything. The visit also gave Bob an opportunity to talk with Pearl in a more relaxed atmosphere. He finally realized why she had agreed to take over The Jefferson. It was her hope that he would stop being a businessman and concentrate on the "I Am" teachings. But what do I really want to do, he wondered to himself? Truthfully, he didn't know. He wanted to do what was right and best, whatever that meant.

On the third day of his visit, the telephone rang and Pearl reluctantly turned the receiver over to him. The call had to do with his real estate business. The caller was an attorney named Mays, who said he represented the Buys. They had reconsidered and now wanted to trade their property in Beverly Hills for Bob's equity in The Jefferson. Having seen the transfer of The Jefferson listed in the daily abstract, they suspected that they had Bob over a barrel. Even though Buys had verbally turned the deal down, they still had the contract Bob had sent, and the two weeks Bob had given them had not yet expired.

Bob hung up the receiver and turned to Pearl and her husband, Jerry. "The Group really wasn't enthusiastic about The Jefferson, as I recall," he said.

"That's true," she confirmed. "We acted out of love for you. The hotel is doing you no good, but none of us is really looking forward to running The Jefferson."

"How would you like to trade The Jefferson for the Beverly Hills property? The big advantage of Falcon Lair is that there is only \$35,000 worth of indebtedness to assume, whereas with the hotel there is something close to \$200,000 worth.

"The Buys want the hotel now and they have got me. I should have had them return that contract I sent them before I closed the deal with the Group. But now since they think I sold the hotel profitably, they believe they can squeeze me."

"They don't sound like very nice people, do they?" Pearl observed. "But they can have the hotel if they want it. The only problem becomes what do we do with the Beverly Hills property?"

“Sell it, of course,” Bob replied. “Or perhaps you’d like to use it as a southern headquarters for the Group. The Group is renting space in San Francisco and you could let that go.”

“Come on, Bob. Nobody wants to move to Los Angeles.”

“Well, since it’s my neck on the line, Loy and I would agree to live there as caretakers, until it gets sold. If you could get a handful of the students to move south temporarily and take up residence at Falcon Lair, we could all get jobs. Our rent paid to the Group would cover the monthly expenses and that would give us time to put the property on the market.”

That is essentially what transpired. The Group swapped the equity in The Jefferson for that of Falcon Lair on February 24th, and Bob and Loy flew down to Los Angeles to take possession of the Group’s new property.

They found the news of the Group’s purchase of Falcon Lair had preceded them. The news boys were crying, “Extra ... Extra.” Bob caught a glimpse of the headlines and bought a paper. The *Los Angeles Times* had a front page banner which read “Love Cult Buys Falcon Lair.” Loy and Bob gaped at one another. “What’s happened?” Loy asked. “Maybe we didn’t get the property after all.”

“Oh, nor” Bob exclaimed. “The press has got wind that the Group bought Falcon Lair and have twisted it all out of recognition. Don’t you see? You and I, and Pearl and Jerry are the love cult.”

Bob and Loy got out to Falcon Lair as fast as they could.

“Gypsy” greeted them and was making her last minute preparations to leave. Bob asked her point blank what she knew about the newspaper article. She took credit for inventing it.

“You know perfectly well The San Francisco Group is no love cult. Why did you tell reporters that it was?”

She goggled at Bob as though he were stupid. “I’ve done you a big favor,” she said. “You’re getting a million in free publicity.” “It’s not true,” Bob insisted.

“So what? It’s a great yarn. I’ve given you a big boost. You’ll probably be able to sell this place for a big price because of that publicity.”

“Mrs. Buys, all of my life I have tried to tell the truth. I don’t think anything good comes from saying things that aren’t so.”

“Gypsy” just shook her head sadly. “Where have you been?” She gave a short laugh. “You aren’t that naive, are you? The way to make money is to tell people what they want to hear. Besides that, I’m not so sure your group isn’t a love cult. You’re not too bad looking yourself, and all those women you hang around with!”

Loy was standing beside Bob and he could see her stiffen. “I’m a married man, Mrs. Buys. I can assure you”

“God, Mr. LeFevre, are you dense! If you don’t see it yet you will. Nobody’s trying to break up your marriage. I’m talking about business. I’ve given you all one hell of a boost. I only wish you could do the same for us with that crummy hotel in Frisco.”

“If you thought the hotel was so bad, why did you insist on getting it?”

“Christ, LeFevre. Are you for real?” “Gypsy” shook her head.

The next day, Bob and Loy, officially acting for The San Francisco Group, took possession of the Beverly Hills property. Then they flew back to San Francisco to wind up their affairs there.

Bob was met by an outraged Ethel Dazey. She was the most socially prominent of the Group and the publicity had upset her more than anyone else. She had already called the *San Francisco Examiner*, and as one of the officers of the Group, explained that the entire love cult story was fabricated. *The Examiner* agreed to print a retraction, although Ethel realized there was no way to overcome the damage that had been done to her reputation.

The next morning, Bob had reporters waiting to see him. The first came from the *Examiner* and was to write the retraction. Bob explained that Ethel had told the truth.

The reporter nodded, as Bob gave him background about the Group. “Just as I thought. Possibly a slow news day. And anything about love, sex or Valentino is good copy when nothing else works. But, man, you got coverage. The AP picked up the story. It’s been carried by Reuters and UP. It’s

worldwide.”

Instead of boosting the value of the property, as “Gypsy” had claimed, she had destroyed its value. The Group found it impossible to sell, and Bob hunted around for a means by which to turn the publicity to favorable account and restore their good names.

An idea finally jelled. Bob’s activities during the last two years had not only focused on his finances, but also on political ideas. He had formed The People’s Unofficial Committee and was genuinely concerned about the prospects for free enterprise in this country. He felt that the country was experiencing an erosion of everyone’s personal freedom, which was brought about by the expansion of the government. There was now a visible communist and socialist influence apparent even in Washington. The eyes and ears of the world were turned towards Falcon Lair. Why not make use of the publicity to promote individual freedom and world peace?

Bob’s idea was to offer the Group’s equity in Falcon Lair as a prize to the individual or group which could come up with the best suggestion as to how peace and freedom could be maintained. All the facts relative to their financial situation would have to be disclosed, but maybe they would find someone who could better handle payments on the mortgage.

The Group agreed to try Bob’s suggestion, and he and his old Army friend, Vern Hansen, planned a pilgrimage, a march for peace and freedom. The march would be held on private property, for the most part, and would be a peaceful affair. The hope was that by approaching the question of peace or war, freedom or slavery, and by managing a good press, that thousands of persons, discerning the principles involved, would join the pilgrimage. Those wishing to participate in the contest would comprise the body of marchers. They would be crying out for “less government, more freedom to behave constructively, and let’s not have another war.” The march would be held from the bottom of Bella Drive, moving upward in a candle-lit procession. Arriving at the Lair, everyone would sign a pledge in which they would agree to support American principles, oppose communism, and accept the idea of peace and freedom.

Thus, just as the publicity about the love cult was flagging, a new burst of front page interest was engendered. This time the public reaction was favorable. The American people were becoming worried about their loss of freedom, and concerned about the chances of becoming embroiled in another war in the Far East. Nevertheless, the level of interest in the peace project was markedly less than the public reaction to the stories about Falcon Lair becoming a haven for the lovelorn.

Despite the favorable write-ups, there were fewer participants than they had hoped for. The pilgrimage, an all day affair, took place on Easter Sunday, April, 1949. It began with a sunrise service from the terrace at Falcon Lair and ended right after dusk as the last of the “pilgrims” came up the hill and signed the petition. The contestants had ninety days in which to submit their proposals for achieving peace and freedom. While the contestants labored to prepare their entries, Ruth Dazey was sent across country to attempt to book speaking engagements for Bob. He would talk about the American way of life and the contest itself.

Meanwhile, Bob hoped to study, meditate, and reflect in order that he might assume leadership of the metaphysical activities Pearl and he had previously been involved in. Bob began by reading up on communism and cracking a few books on political philosophy. The more he studied, the less enthusiastic he became about the metaphysical approach. His approach had always been through his emotions and inner “experiences.” The people who had written what he was now reading were reasonable, and sought to approach the great mysteries of life in as detached and objective a manner as possible. To Bob, this approach seemed far more likely to succeed.

Ruth wrote that she had booked Bob before a prestigious club in Salt Lake City, and had engagements in Ogden and other nearby cities. She was moving on to Omaha. Then Loy came up with another idea which made the speaking tour even more impressive. She would accompany him (The San Francisco Group would underwrite their expenses) and sing at the meetings where Bob was to talk. Her golden voice would surely be captivating to any audience. She would conclude her repertoire with a rendition of the Lord’s Prayer.

This nationwide tour went off as planned. With his earlier experiences as an actor and announcer, Bob found that he could give a very good account of himself from a public platform. By the time he and Loy arrived in Omaha, he had organized a short, written quiz of twenty-five, “yes” or “no” questions to present to his audience, while they were eating. The answers would be collected before his speech, and by reviewing the answers Bob got a pretty good feel for where his audience was in its thinking. The first two questions of the quiz were: “Do you know and understand the purposes and methods of Communism and Socialism?” and “Do you favor either Communism or Socialism?” Without exception the first question was answered affirmatively and the second, negatively.

The remaining twenty-three questions were all examples of communist programs, taken from the Communist *Manifesto* or *Das Kapital* by Marx. They included such items as asking his listeners if they favored public schooling, social security, and the government post office. While people in his audiences were generally in agreement in thinking they knew what socialism was, and in being opposed to it, when it got down to the specifics in the remaining questions, their blindspots were revealed.

As Bob had suspected, when it came to certain areas that were being debated in the public media (public schooling, welfare, the post office), large numbers of people stood squarely in favor of the communist or socialist solution, while stoutly maintaining they did not support communism. Bob was amazed to discover that few people really understood the differences between the American free enterprise way and that of the communists. Increasingly, he had seen public figures taking a similar position. They claimed to be patriotic and pro-American, yet took stands in favor of governmental policies, which invariably undermined free enterprise and the right of each person to own and manage his own property without government interference.

From Omaha, Bob and Loy travelled eastward, following-up Ruth’s bookings. They stopped in major locations such as Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Chicago, Columbus and finally New York City, where they rejoined Ruth.

The climax of the tour was to occur in New York City, where Bob would call on Billy Rose, the well-known empressario who had recently added to his fame by creating the magnificent Aquacade at the World’s Fair in San Francisco. All of the signed pledges were to be turned over to Rose so that he could capitalize on the peace pilgrimage and translate it into a great nation-wide expression of patriotism and support for the American Way of Life.

One Sunday morning shortly after they arrived in New York City, Bob met Billy Rose by appointment at his apartment. It was 11:00 A.M. and Rose came to the apartment door in his robe. He refused to invite Bob in, but listened to what he had to say. When Bob explained that he visualized a Peace and Freedom Train that would travel across the country, Rose wanted to know how much he would be paid for the effort.

LeFevre responded that he had no money to finance the project and would leave it up to Rose how much he would make for conducting and publicizing the freedom train. Bob had no compunction about this, since Rose was going to have to raise all the money anyway.

Rose gave LeFevre a look of total incredulity and shut the door. Bob had presumed that Rose’s public expressions of patriotism and support for the American Way of Life appearing in print had come straight from the man’s heart, rather than from his pocketbook. That closed door showed how wrong he was.

PHOTO Sections

“The word anarchy properly indicates a doctrine which is against government. This may seem like splitting hairs but we are not against government. As a matter of fact we are strongly in favor of self-government and hold that civilization is dependent upon such government.” January 19, 1960

Chapter 13 – The Shift from Politics

The time arrived for the award to be presented to the winner of the “peace and freedom” campaign. Three finalists were chosen, each of their arguments reflecting a distinct method of achieving world peace. One religious group had the idea of creating a world religion with its center at Falcon Lair. This group held that peace and freedom were essentially moral ideas that would have to be developed within the confines of a religious structure. The second view was represented by a spokesman for the California Rocket Society. They believed that peace and freedom were the results of power and force. The government should develop a missile armory to insure peace. The third idea was presented by a Reverend Singer. Singer thought that education contained the only possible answer. War did not occur among people who knew and understood one another.

None of the three finalists actually wanted Falcon Lair. They had entered the competition to get publicity, although the contest guidelines had made it plain that the winner would be assuming both the assets and liabilities connected with Falcon Lair. All of them were in worse financial shape than The San Francisco Group. So at last Bob called all three finalists together to see if they would temporarily join forces and jointly accept the property. Not a chance! Their mutual disagreements precluded any possibility of working together. The irony was conspicuous. They were people supposedly dedicated to peace but they couldn’t cooperate long enough to even accept an award together.

Since none of the three would accept the award, The San Francisco Group retained possession of Falcon Lair. The bank didn’t want the property back while the mortgage payments were current. It would be at least six months before they started foreclosure proceedings. So the Group decided to stay at Falcon Lair at least until the bank evicted them. Bob believed that it would be morally wrong for the Group to profit from the property since it had been offered as a prize. Therefore they were willing to let it revert back to the lien-holder.

In the summer of 1949, Bob had started a study program, and he now continued to read a variety of political and philosophical books. Slowly an idea formed in his mind. “Politics is the answer!” he thought. The Republican Party was his natural choice. The Democrats seemed to confuse ‘liberal,’ a word originally serving to identify a supporter of liberty, with generosity with the taxpayers’ money. In January, 1950, Bob attended a meeting of Republican Party workers in Los Angeles, who were getting organized for the elections.

The more Bob thought about and studied politics, the less business activity appealed to him. He already knew the difficulties first-hand when it came to meeting a payroll, and what happened when it wasn’t met. He had also become increasingly concerned with domestic policy, foreign affairs, and with the communist threat. Business seemed banal by comparison.

Bob believed that he would make an effective candidate for the Republicans. He was sure of himself on the public platform and thought he understood the issues. But before he undertook such a drastic step as throwing his hat into the ring, he decided to talk to Lt. Governor Goodwin (Goody) Knight, a Republican. Bob laid it on the line. His name had been associated before the public in connection with the affairs at Falcon Lair. His personal financial affairs were appalling. He had just published a “Report to Creditors” in December, 1949, which seemed but a prelude to the filing of personal bankruptcy. Could a person with these events in his immediate background hope to win GOP support?

Knight encouraged Bob to run for office, and asked what particular office he had in mind. Bob had been dismayed at the record of Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, representative from the 14th Congressional District. She was the number one absentee from Congress and, when she was there,

she almost invariably supported more controls and taxes to be levied against business. Knight thought her seat was an excellent one to go after, but cautioned Bob that he would have to move into the 14th District before filing his candidacy. Knight also explained to Bob that he could offer no personal support until the Party Central Committee and Governor Earl Warren took the lead in endorsing him.

Bob made his plans. As soon as a suitable place could be located in the 14th District, he and Loy and the other residents of Falcon Lair would move. Then he would file for Congress and prepare for the campaign. Edith located a number of rooms at the Asbury Apartments near MacArthur Park, on the fringes of the 14th District.

Betty Carlson, a long time Republican, helped Bob file and then seek the official endorsement of the Republican Party. When Helen Douglas decided not to run for re-election, Sam Yorty, a “relatively clean” Democrat, decided to run in her place. Bob followed Betty’s advice and went to various “public” gatherings and “fact-finding” meetings staged by the GOP. Betty was impressed by Bob’s willingness to state his position frankly, and she approved of his ideas for reducing the role of the federal government in everyday affairs. He won the Republican endorsement in the 14th, which gained him some private support from the savings and loan industry, local businessmen, and even a “God bless” from the Reverend Fifield at First Congregational Church, one of the more prestigious churches in the 14th.

Bob was making head way until the middle of May, when the Republican Party’s attitude toward him changed, and his support began to dry up. The *Los Angeles Times* ran a story saying that the Republicans had changed their endorsement and selected Jack Hardy for the 14th Congressional race for Congress. Bob felt as if he had been knifed in the back by his own party. Furthermore, no one would give him or Betty Carlson a clear explanation as to why his endorsement had been withdrawn. Their only advice was that he was a newcomer, had not yet “paid” his dues, and should help on the Nixon campaign.

By the time the primaries took place in June, Bob was already a “has been.” His finances were in such bad shape that he filed personal bankruptcy in July, 1950. Although his interest in The Jefferson Hotel (both its assets and liabilities) had been transferred to the Buys, Bob’s creditors continued to look to him for payment of their bills. They had never agreed to substitute the Buys for Bob. And to make matters worse, Gerald Buys had committed suicide, and “Gypsy” Buys reneged on her deal and stopped honoring some of The Jefferson’s debts. Since Bob didn’t have the funds to pay his bills, there seemed to be little else to do except to seek protection from his creditors and try to start over. Nevertheless, his mother’s code of responsibility stuck with him and Bob vowed to pay off every last penny he owed, regardless of how long it took.

The one solid thing behind him was his “extended” family. The mainstays of this group were, of course, Loy, and their son, Tommy, Ruth Dazey, Edith Shank, and Marjorie Llewellyn. Ruth and Edith (Edy) had known Bob since his “I Am” days; Marjorie, since Bob’s World War II stay in London. Each of these women had jobs and were self-supporting. Much of their spare time had been spent helping in the peace and freedom campaign, and with Bob’s ill-fated primary campaign. They found Bob to be an inspiring person, a very gentle man who sought wisdom and humility. To them he seemed a man of destiny. Both Bob and Loy willingly accepted them into their own family, realizing that true families were constituted more along “love” lines than “blood” lines. This had created a delightful comradeship and esprit de corps in their lives.

They shared with him a concern for the direction in which the country was headed. Ruth’s family had exposed her to the message that the American way of life was being threatened by collectivist thinking. Edy had heard the same thing from the Ballards. Marji had seen what was happening in post-war Britain. Like Bob, they all shared an awareness that human freedom was under attack and accepted a personal responsibility to do whatever they could to get America “back on track.” They vaguely conceived of this as their “crusade.” Their work together on Bob’s campaign was part of this effort and made them acquainted with each other’s strengths as well as weaknesses. Edith was, without a doubt, best when it came to finances. Ruth probably had the sharpest intellect of all. She was a woman of ideas. The crusade, which had really started with the “peace and freedom” campaign at Falcon Lair had

reached her innermost self. Marjorie brought to the group a sense of refinement and good breeding, as well as a knack for watching over Bob's still ailing back. She was an excellent physical therapist.

Loy was at the center of everything. She handled the household management and when cash was exceptionally short, she went out and got a job. Her cheerful outlook in the face of the most disastrous events was sometimes almost disconcerting. Her optimism in the face of every problem acted as a counterweight to Bob's tendency to worry. She gave Bob complete latitude and understood that each of the other women brought much needed qualities and talents to their mutual efforts. If she resented their presence, which would have been natural, it never showed. Loy never argued with anybody. She was the peacemaker whenever differences arose. The group was indeed a "spiritual family," a group of compatible friends who shared the same values and goals. Their ties were often closer than if they had been related to one another. It was Bob's knack for bringing them together that constituted his own achievement. These ladies were Bob's "angels."

Bob was in for a shock as he became involved in Nixon's campaign for Senate. He had the opportunity to listen to Nixon speak on various occasions. One particular speech really opened Bob's eyes. In it, Nixon outlined his own political strategy. He said that in order to be effective in support of free enterprise principles, he needed to win the election. To get votes, he had to pander to what people wanted. Nixon admitted he would do anything to get elected. He would support a union strike or cross a picket line, whichever he thought was more popular with the voters. He would tell people what they wanted to hear. In short, Bob realized that Nixon was just like any other politician, willing to throw principle to the winds in order to get votes.

Bob now realized what an atypical candidate he had been. He had viewed his own campaign as a chance to state the truth as he saw it, and to let the chips fall where they would. Bob felt betrayed and slightly disgusted, but it was time he gave up on politics because he needed a job badly. It was time for him to start all over again. A meeting was held at the apartment in the Asbury. What should be done now that Bob's political campaign was over? Ruth summed it up as well as anybody could.

"Do we believe in this crusade that we've been conducting? Is freedom in jeopardy? Obviously there's fighting in Korea and there's nothing we can do about it now. But what of freedom? Do we mean what Bob said during the race? Or were we just posing in an effort to win political victory?"

Bob looked around the room at the expressions on their various faces. "I've learned one thing as a result of this campaign election," he said. "Naturally I feel badly that I lost, even though I knew there wasn't much chance of victory. But freedom can't be achieved this way. There is too much misguided ambition and too much willingness to compromise in politics. I was stabbed in the back and still don't know what happened. I suspect it had something to do with my early involvement with the 'I Am'." Everyone was listening. "What I'm trying to get at is this: If we mean business about freedom it's going to be a life-long effort. There's no quick and easy solution. Socialist and communist influences are in ascendancy. They have taken over already, and if they are not total it's no credit to our efforts. I am reasonably convinced that politics and religion are not the answer. I don't know what really goes on at the inner levels. I've had some experiences; I've seen some things. But I'm less and less certain about them. So I'm not looking for any help from the Masters. I don't expect any divine intervention."

"Do you mean to tell us that the Ballards and the 'I Am' teachings were false?" Edith asked.

"No, Edy. I'm not saying that. There are great truths that we know and have shared in our individual experiences. But there's a lot of nonsense there, too. For instance, remember that dictation Daddy gave back in Cleveland right after I'd joined their staff? Nazi submarines had been trapped by the Masters under water. Now that was pure bull. I sensed it at the time and I'll bet many of the students did, too."

Edith gave a knowing look in the direction of Ruth, who now spoke up.

"Then what about those dictations coming through you, Bob? Was some of that nonsense, too? Or maybe all of it?"

"Some of it might have been true, but I'm reasonably certain now that a lot of it was contradictory and confusing. And probably nonsensical.

“We’re at a crossroads right now. And whatever happened in the past, whether reasonable or unreasonable, is over. From this point on there’s no assurance that we’re doing ‘what the Masters wish.’ I think all of us have used that thought from time to time to carry us over rough spots.

“If any of you decide to continue this crusade for freedom, it’s your own decision exclusively. As for me, I’m going to do my best. If you decide to help, you’ll be most welcome I assure you. At the moment, I haven’t any idea what I’ll do nor how to go about doing it. But I’m going to try.

“I’ll tell you something else I’ve learned. I’m a profoundly ignorant man. I no longer buy the idea that if one’s heart is pure the ‘Presence’ knows all the answers and will take care of everything. I think that’s nonsense for sure. Of course, every now and again, and in spite of the odds, something completely favorable has occurred apparently brought about by forces outside myself. Most of the time it hasn’t worked. A great deal of the time, in spite of my ‘calls’ and in spite of the best I can do, forces outside myself have dumped on me.”

Ruth frowned. “Bob, do you think there are Masters? Are there forces outside one’s self that are wholly good?”

“I don’t know Ruth. I really don’t know. I was so sure at one time. I do think there’s ‘something’ out there. I’m reasonably sure of that. But whether it’s good, bad, or even just mischievous, I can’t say for sure. Perhaps it isn’t even out there. Maybe it’s a part of our inner selves that nobody really understands.”

“I believe in the Masters.”

“Fine.” Bob smiled at her. “I wouldn’t tamper with your beliefs.”

“I believe in them, too.” Edy said.

“I don’t know anything about it,” Marji said. “But I like the idea of working for a proper goal.”

Edith shifted impatiently. “Bob, I want to help you. What’s the first thing we ought to do?”

“My first task is to stop fooling around and get a job.”

“No.” Edith squared her shoulders. “Our first job is to find another place to live. This apartment is too expensive.”

Edith had put everyone’s feet on the ground. The group decided to stay together, and within a few days a furnished house for rent had been located on Arapahoe Street. It didn’t take Bob long to find a job. In late June, 1950, he became the Executive Director of the Wage Earners’ Committee in Los Angeles.

The Committee’s purpose was to take a stand against the “Labor Boss.” According to the Wage Earners’, the unions were the chief source of difficulty in the United States. The Committee objected to strikes, union dues, assessments, fines, and most especially to the ability of most unions to collect membership dues through the payroll checkoff. The Committee wasn’t interested in attacking any particular union, such as the Teamsters or Steelworkers. They thought that all unions were an anathema. The unions paid no taxes, were exempt from anti-trust regulation, and the government often sided with them against the productive businessman. Given his experiences, Bob was an excellent spokesman for the group. His pay was to be \$200 every month. Back home, there was rejoicing when Bob announced he had taken the job. Although the money was small, the crusade was on its way again.

One of Bob’s most memorable appearances with the Wage Earners’ Committee took place on television, during a debate with the Retail Clerk’s Union. The question was: Do Unions Have Too Much Power? Bob had done his homework and intended to concentrate on the issues, rather than personalities. When his turn came, he said, “Before we proceed further, I think it would be a good idea if these gentlemen of the Retail Clerk’s Union would tell the viewing audience what they do with all the money they collect.

“According to the figures we have compiled, the unions of this country receive a monthly income of \$80,000,000 tax free. That’s nearly a billion dollars a year. So before we can judge just how much power the Labor Bosses have, I’d like to know where the money goes.”

This caught the union debaters off-guard. They had never heard these figures, but realized they weren’t too far afield. Instead of trying to rebut them, they simply ignored Bob’s question and went on

talking about the advantages of unionization. After several minutes, the moderator brought Bob back into the discussion and asked for his response to the union's latest argument.

"Before I respond," Bob said, "I would still like to know what the unions do with that \$ 80 million a month. I think the television audience is entitled to have an answer to the point I've raised. What do you do with all that money?"

Before Bob could blink, one of the union men leaped to his feet, grabbed a bottle of Sparklets water off the table, and came toward him with the bottle over his head. The other union speaker lunged for his partner and brought him back to his seat, motioning at the whirring cameras. The whole episode was watched by thousands of viewers. From that moment on, the Wage Earners' had the debate all its own way.

The program ended amidst a barrage of telephone calls congratulating the Wage Earners' Committee. For days after the affair, as Bob moved about town, people waved at him in recognition.

After four months of working for the Committee, Bob realized that his commitment to the "crusade" was actually costing him money. A promised increase in pay never developed because the membership base of the Wage Earners' Committee had not expanded as quickly as they had hoped. The economic necessity of paying bills made him receptive to an offer by William Stephenson to go to work for United Taxpayers of California, which Stephenson was bankrolling.

In his new job, Bob planned to make public appearances and give speeches in favor of limited government and fewer taxes. He would also appear on radio station KHJ with a quarter hour, weekly program of his own called 'The Voice of Freedom.' The pay was double what he had been making and the opportunity beckoned. Bob took the job.

Bob was an effective representative for United Taxpayers, but his efforts did not pay off. Membership growth was slow and his radio program was canceled after three months. Bob could see that his activities were a drain on Stephenson's resources. Finally, during a lunch with Stephenson, Bob told him that he felt that Stephenson's own activities would be stronger and less encumbered if Bob left his employ. Stephenson accepted his resignation. But Bob was curious as to Stephenson's view of the real threat to America, and before their association ended, he asked him about it.

"I've been associated with the Wage Earners' Committee, as you know," Bob said. "It was the view of that organization that the most serious threat to this country was provided by the unions and big Labor Bosses.

"Prior to that I ran for office. In the political circles I was in, Russia and the communists were viewed as the most serious threat. What do you think it is?"

Mr. Stephenson looked at him closely and then looked around the restaurant to see if anyone was listening to their conversation. He shifted uneasily, then said, "Let's pay the bill and while we walk back to the office, I'll answer your question."

On the street, instead of heading back toward the office, they walked slowly in the opposite direction. Stephenson had already discovered that his office had been bugged once before and wanted to take no chances.

"Now to answer your question, Bob," he said. "I am not sure you will understand this entirely. At least, not at once. The real danger to this country comes from the government itself."

"We've got to have a government."

"Of course. I'm not suggesting otherwise. There are some things such as public streets, sewer systems, fire and police protection that may be far more efficiently and economically handled by a public agency than by private companies. At least that is my view for the moment. But there is one agency of government, viewed by nearly everyone as sacred that is engaged in wrecking everything."

Bob felt a chill down his spine. Stephenson frowned.

"It's the public school system, Bob. I don't dare say that openly. But that's it. The school system is a separate, distinct, and unique government all to itself. It has independent taxing power and authority. It can confiscate property if it needs to build schools. It can and does control the view of future generations. And it's sacred, like religion. Were I to criticize it in public, I would lose my credibility."

Bob asked a few questions and soon realized that Stephenson had pointed out a danger which he had never considered as a possible problem.

Back at Arapahoe Street, Bob related his conversation with Stephenson to Ruth. "It might interest you to know," she said, "that Mr. Stephenson isn't alone in that view. There's a newspaper published in Santa Ana, whose editorials have been criticizing the public school system for years. Why don't you pick up a few issues and see for yourself if what those editorials say is important."

When Bob got hold of the Santa Ana *Register*, he discovered that the publisher, R. C. Hoiles, was an outspoken critic of government compulsion in the school system. Hoiles called them "gun-run" schools because the government threatened everyone with a gun if they didn't pay their school taxes or send their children to school. Bob was impressed by the logic of Hoiles' position. In fact he admitted to Ruth that Hoiles and Stephenson might even be right. "But," he added "I could never say any of that in my speeches. No one would believe me."

Ruth's reaction was straight to the point. "Bob," she wanted to know, "where's your dedication to truth? Are you afraid to tell people what they don't want to hear?"

After a pause, Bob said, "Yes. I guess I am. But all in good time. Perhaps things will change or develop in such a way that I can come out publicly in that area. For right now, I wouldn't dare. Remember, I'm looking for a job."

Ruth was employed by another organization that was involved in the crusade to save America, called Spiritual Mobilization. Headed by James Ingebretsen, William Johnson, and Reverend Fifield (who had endorsed Bob in the primary), the major focus of the group was the monthly publication of a little magazine called *Faith and Freedom*. The publication had been partly inspired by the efforts of Leonard Read (former head of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce), who had moved to New York and started the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) in 1946. Bob applied for a job with Spiritual Mobilization but was turned down because they wanted "prestige" people rather than "street fighters."

V. Orval Watts, who held a Ph.D. in economics, but had no teaching post at the time, was one of Ruth's co-workers. Watts was invited to conduct a number of classes at the group's Arapahoe home. It was the first time Bob had actually studied free market economics, and he was amazed how Watts stated the realities of human action in language that everyone could understand. The principles Watts set forth were essentially the same principles taught by the "I Am," only in lay terms. Watts also explained that the basic free market principles he was teaching were only taught at a few places in the country. Read's Foundation for Economic Education was probably the foremost organization in the world with respect to free market education. Such teachings were not to be found on any American university campus.

During his conversations with Orval Watts, Bob conceived of the idea of seeking employment with the Foundation for Economic Education in New York. Loy's mother and sister were back in New York City and he could temporarily share an apartment with them, should he be successful in landing the job. During the summer of 1951, Bob happened across an advertisement seeking a person to assist in driving a car cross country. This arrangement would enable him to get to New York in order to visit FEE and inquire about joining their staff. He found another ad for a driver to return a car back to Los Angeles, in the event he didn't get the job.

As it turned out, FEE was not interested in Bob's services, but he was introduced to Leonard Read, and had an opportunity to get acquainted with Floyd (Baldy) Harper, who had previously taught economics at Cornell University. Bob's visit was memorable because Harper was the first person he had ever listened to that questioned the basic assumption that human beings require a government. As Harper put it to him, "We've all been wondering just how much government is needed. Some of us here are now thinking that perhaps the correct amount is no government at all." Such a radical idea shocked Bob, but it at least seemed respectable coming from a former Cornell teacher.

Bob was fascinated with books like Rose Wilder Lane's *The Discovery of Freedom* and other materials he obtained through the Foundation for Economic Education. Mrs. Lane's book simply got under his skin. One of her main themes was that human energy is under the control of the individual human being. It was as though she reinforced Daddy Ballard's preaching that each person is in control

of himself. The mainspring of human progress, she said, was the removal of political restrictions from the individual. It was only when human energy was uninhibited by outside political forces that human progress went forward.

Bob was anxious to put his new found sources of information to use, but he still needed a job. He had made application to all the radio stations, and even a few of the new television stations in Los Angeles. While he was marking time, Bob organized a new series of classroom discussions and proceeded to sign up a few people who were willing to listen to him talk about the danger to freedom brought about by the socialist influences in this country. Watts, and Johnson and a brilliant young fellow named Herb Cornuelle were invited to make presentations at these classes.

In the meantime, Reverend Fifield tried to convince him to run for a post in local city government, but Bob turned that offer down. He had had enough of politics. Education was what was needed.

“Liberty is always possible. It can come only when it is earned. It must not be thrust upon people who do not understand it or who do not want it. It can never be provided for some by others through political devices, peaceful or warlike. Liberty is the great prize. And its sacred cause is advanced by each individual who, in his heart, comes to understand.”
April 1, 1960

Chapter 14 – Miami to Colorado Springs

Bob continued his search for a job. One day he received a strange premonition that he should go to Florida. It made no sense to anybody, but it was the kind of hunch he had had before which paid off. He thought he could get back into radio, for there were no unions in south Florida to stand in his way. Although they denied it, Bob’s “family” must have thought he had received a message from the Masters. How else could this hunch be explained?

To Bob’s way of thinking, the American people were slowly permitting their government to take control of everything in the country, and they seemed to be unaware of the issues. If the American dream was somehow related to the ideals that had started this country, then daily events involving the expansion of government took on alarming overtones. It was part of the American heritage that each person was free to try, to win or lose, on the basis of his own skills, ability, and perseverance, and then to enjoy the fruits of his labor as he saw fit. Now all one had to do was to organize a political lobby and call upon the government to solve the problem. As the government got bigger, the people got smaller, and their willingness to address their own problems and solve them, or at least live with them, was being eroded in favor of paternalistic, political panaceas.

This is what Bob believed he had to fight. He considered himself a crusader. His job had to bring in a living, but it also had to allow for expressions of his devotion to a cause larger than himself. These were the thoughts in his mind as he drove toward Miami seeking a job in September, 1951. He and his “angels” had barely scraped up enough cash to finance the trip, but Bob figured he had enough for gas money and one or two nights of lodging and meals. As he neared Miami he tuned into each one of the various radio stations and finally selected the CBS and NBC affiliated stations as the two best, to which he would apply.

As he approached the outskirts of the city, he stopped and called the two station managers to see if he could set up appointments with them for the next day. Although he was exhausted from the long car trip, Bob pumped a lot of pep into his voice and had a lucky break at WQAM, the NBC outlet. The station manager was in his office, and was impressed enough with Bob’s insistence and experience to set an appointment for the following day.

Everything worked in harmony with Bob’s hunch. The NBC station manager had an opening where Bob’s talents would be useful. The production manager went over the details of the job and firmed up his salary. But, before he could start work, Bob would have to drive back to Los Angeles, and then back to Miami, this time bringing Loy and Tommy with him, as well as any of the others that decided to stay with him. Bob promised to start his new job the third week of October. He wondered if he could manage two more cross country trips and a move for his family in such a short time, but he was riding a wave. His hunch had paid off and he now believed that he could be back in Miami, ready to work, as he had promised. It seemed to be his best chance.

When Bob pulled back into Arapahoe Street, he had been gone six days and six nights. He told the family of his new job, and then went to sleep. After Bob awoke “the family” made its decisions. Loy, Tommy, and Bob would leave within a week or ten days for Miami. Ruth, Edy, and Marji would stay behind temporarily, to give notice to their employers and to terminate their rental agreement.

All agreed that Bob’s trip east had been successful. WQAM was a major radio outlet and he had lined up a good news job. Perhaps he would even be able to develop his commentaries on the news. The future seemed bright.

Ever practical Edith brought everyone back to earth. “Where’s the money coming from for the

trip?"

"I don't know," Bob admitted. "But I've got to get back to Miami for that job."

The next day, Bob received a telephone call from his mother, Ethel. She had been living in Gardena with her daughter, Lauris, but the two of them had numerous disputes about the disturbances that Lauris' six children caused.

"Robert, I've got to leave here. I've been in touch with my sister, Coral, in East Aurora, New York. We're both widows and have decided to live together. Can you take me there?"

"Take you there? What do you mean?"

"I want you to drive me back there in your car. I'll be glad to pay you for your services and you can put my things in your car."

Bob put two and two together. East Aurora was at least on the east coast. If he could get paid for driving that far, he was sure he could manage it to Miami. Maybe a way was opening up for him to take that job at WQAM after all.

Bob's mother was eager to get away from her daughter and grandchildren. She offered to pay the expenses of renting a tow-behind trailer, and assured Bob she could be ready to leave in a couple of days.

Bob broke the news to Loy and the others. With careful management the trip east could now be paid for. Arrangements were made and Bob, Loy, Tommy, and Ethel departed for New York. Despite the fact that Ethel had a minor stroke on the way and was hospitalized for a day, Bob arrived in Miami in time to report for his new job. He had gambled on his Miami hunch and had won. It had seemed to be a foolish and childish thing to drive from Los Angeles to Miami looking for a job, but he had found one.

Bob had picked a good city and a good station to work for. He enjoyed his work, his associates, and was making good money. Ruth, Edy, and Marji came east in time for all of them to celebrate Christmas together in their new residence, a rented home on Brickell Avenue.

With a new job, Bob's own finances were on a much sounder basis, and he was able to use some of his earnings to begin paying off the creditors from his bankruptcy days. During the years he stayed in Miami, he was able to pay off or compromise all of those debts, except the one owed to "Ma" Gray, which took several years longer. Bob's wariness about the government was increased when the Internal Revenue Service located him in Miami and "arranged" for him to pay his back taxes for 1948.

With time on his hands between broadcast duties, Bob began acquainting himself with the business and political climate in the Miami area. Through a contact at the Miami Chamber of Commerce, Bob met Bob Overholzer, owner of a credit company; John Anderson, a prominent attorney; and Roy Page an elderly, retired man of means. These three began to introduce him about town and through them he became acquainted with the Babcock Construction Company. Babcock hired Bob to write and present a fifteen minute commentary, using the same format that he had employed back in Los Angeles in his "Voice of Freedom" broadcasts. This time his show was called "Past Is Prologue." The shows were devoted to describing what America stood for in the past: free enterprise, free men, and a limited government, based on the Declaration of Independence, the Decalogue, and the Golden Rule.

Bob felt that more crusade work had to be done. He consulted his trio of new friends. With his radio connection, he was already telling the story of free enterprise as best he knew how. What had to happen, as he saw it, was a much needed reformation within the government. The voting records of members of Congress had to be checked and those who tended to follow the socialist line had to be weeded out. Couldn't all those dedicated to free enterprise in Miami group themselves together in an effective organization? Could they not by such a process, hope to endorse only "good" people for government and actively oppose the "bad" ones?

This was the idea behind the Miami Freedom Club which Bob helped organize. The idea was warmly received by his compatriots in Miami, and with the advice of Reverend Fifield back in Los Angeles, who had started numerous such clubs himself, they were successful in attracting a number of prominent people to their roster. The club would meet once a month for a gala banquet and they would listen to a guest speaker of national prominence. Such people as Vining Davis, chairman of the board of

ALCOA, General Mark Clark, and General James Van Fleet were all received as honored speakers.

Bob's growing coterie of friends felt they could not wield much in the way of political influence by having one Freedom Club meeting per month. They needed another organization that would convene at least once a week. They wanted large numbers of members, high visibility and a constant flow of words in favor of their position. This was the genesis of the Miami Breakfast Club which Bob and his friends put together. Each weekly breakfast meeting featured a political office holder as the main speaker. The purpose of the club was to put the guest politician on notice that they would support only those in favor of restraining government. Party affiliation meant nothing at all. The Breakfast Club wanted an end to government growth, a reduction in taxes, and a cancellation of government's role as Big Daddy Charity.

During the 1952 presidential campaign Eisenhower and Nixon toured Dade County. Bob felt partly responsible for their presence, even though he had been a Taft supporter. He was on newsroom duty when Ike gave a speech at Bayfront Park, but Loy and others from the "family" were there. Loy was introduced to Eisenhower and even shook his hand. Bob arranged for a press conference with Nixon at his Biscayne headquarters later that same night. Bob hoped to show Nixon that the GOP in south Florida could at least get a favorable reception from the press. When Bob arrived at Key Biscayne, there were already ten or twelve reporters present. Bob had been promised an introduction to Nixon and a handshake for old time's sake. When Nixon emerged, he started to approach Bob, who was standing in front of the reporters. Nixon peered closely at Bob and then stared. Instead of a friendly greeting, Bob felt a wave of hostility. Nixon turned to an aide and whispered something. Then he abruptly turned about face and went back to the tent which was serving as his headquarters. There was no press conference. Bob was crushed. But despite his disappointment, his reputation and popularity in south Florida politics were not diminished.

A short time later, Bob was approached by the Gore family to become news director for their new television station, WFTL-TV, in Fort Lauderdale. They said he could write his own ticket and would be able to establish news broadcast policy. Although Bob had worked several years in Miami to build his reputation, the offer in Fort Lauderdale was quite attractive. The only drawback was what might become of his crusade in Miami? He thought that he might commute between the two cities in an effort to maintain his contacts in Miami. He certainly could use an increase in pay and he believed that he might have a wider impact on people through television than through radio. He accepted the job.

After a short while at WFTL-TV, Bob realized that he had erred. It was impossible to remain in close contact with his friends in Miami, and the Breakfast Club and Freedom Club were already suffering. In addition, Bob had not expected there to be such a difference between, WFTL-TV a UHF station, and its competitors, which were all VHF. To his dismay, instead of competing with the other stations on a head-to-head basis, his station's signal was lost to many viewers.

After working at the station a month, the manager, Nick Kersta, called Bob into his office to discuss a problem. Their parent company, The Fort Lauderdale *Daily News*, also owned by the Gores, wanted to stage a subscription drive and was willing to sponsor the six o'clock TV news. However, they wanted a format that would really grip the viewers' attention and get results. Could Bob devise something?

Bob assured Nick that he had something in mind and Bob came up with a forerunner of today's television news formats. Called "The World Today," Bob made use of the visual effect of a newspaper city room and combined it with the immediacy of news on radio. The problem with television news in 1953 was that filmclips of news events were already out-dated by the time they appeared on TV. Video taping did not exist and news film required large amounts of time to process. Bob discovered a way to overcome these obstacles.

He designed a set which portrayed the typical city room of a daily newspaper. He brought into it two functional teletype machines, so that viewers would actually see them at work. Bob sat at the head of a large board room table as editor-in-chief, with other reporters ranged along both sides. One reporter presented international news, another, national stories, a third, sports, and a fourth covered local news.

Ruth was hired as secretary and operated the teletype machines, ripping off incoming sheets and distributing them to the proper reporter. Three cameras were used to pan the scene, two in the “newsroom,” and one for shots of the wire service printers and Ruth as she distributed her stories.

The copy was prepared only thirty minutes before show time, so it was fresh. Bob stressed spontaneity, and if a story broke while they were on the air, the reporters were to speak their minds freely. This allowed the show to have an immediacy like no other television program of its time. Bob also used another tool that had tremendous impact. When a story broke on the air, Bob would ask Ruth to get the leading figure involved in the story on the phone, no matter where he lived. A live interview would be conducted, and a divided screen was used if a picture of the person being interviewed was available in the adjacent newspaper morgue.

“The World Today” was a hit from the moment it began. The show was so exciting, that Bob and Ruth and the reporters didn’t even remember they were on the air once the program opened. In the first month of operation, the program scored six national news “beats” including ones breaking in New York, Los Angeles, Wisconsin and Havana. Despite the poor position channel-wise, the show sold subscriptions for the *Daily News* until the paper begged it to lay off. They were expanding more rapidly than the plant could handle, and they had to take time out to enlarge press capacity.

Bob’s reputation as a speaker continued unabated. He made himself available in Miami, Fort Lauderdale and elsewhere in the state. One day in October, 1953, Bob received a request to speak from the Fort Lauderdale Council for the Girl Scouts of America. Bob accepted the invitation, but due to the pressure of his work put off selecting the exact topic he would discuss. A few days later, one of their publicity people called him to get the title of his talk. They wanted to use it in publicizing the event. During the course of this conversation, the lady from the Girl Scout Council mentioned that he shouldn’t plan to talk about the United Nations.

This comment rather startled Bob. Although he hadn’t planned on speaking about the U.N., he was certainly not going to permit his speech to be censored. In fact, he told his caller, they could get another speaker if they intended to restrict his comments in any fashion. The lady handling public relations for the Girl Scouts became really upset. “We really don’t want to cancel your speech, Mr. LeFevre, but neither can we allow you to talk about the United Nations. Haven’t you ever read the *Girl Scout Handbook*?”

“No, I haven’t,” Bob responded. “I have been around quite a few years and have never read it. I plan to be around quite a few more years. I do not plan to read it now or later.”

“Oh, this is terrible!” his caller replied. “I’ll bring over a copy and show you why you mustn’t refer to the U.N.”

Within 30 minutes, the woman showed up at Bob’s office. His secretary ushered her in, and after Bob’s initial refusal to look at the *Handbook*, she finally thrust it into his hands and practically insisted that he at least read the one page she had marked.

What he saw actually surprised him. The *Handbook* claimed that every citizen of the United States was a citizen of the United Nations. It tried to equate American patriotism with the idea of a One World order.

Bob finally looked up, amazed. His mind was made up. “If you want me as a speaker, I WILL speak about the U.N. But I have no desire to cause you or anyone else embarrassment. Simply pick another speaker and no more need be said.”

Within a day or two, Nick Kersta came into Bob’s office, chuckling. It seems he had been getting one call after another from socially prominent people in town urging that Bob either be fired or disciplined. Nick wanted to know what Bob had done to make so many people sore at him. Bob explained the situation, and the fact that he was now refusing to talk before the Girl Scouts unless they permitted him to discuss the United Nations.

Nick suggested that Bob write up this incident in full detail, so that he could use it to quiet the nerves of the owners of the station, who were also getting flack from the Girl Scouts and their supporters. When Mr. Gore, the principal in the Fort Lauderdale *Daily News* which owned WFTL-TV,

saw Bob's report, he suggested that it be circulated to other conservative groups around the country. They were obviously unaware of the pro-U.N. stance of the Girl Scouts, and should be made aware of it.

The result was a documentary folder of approximately 36 pages, which was copied and distributed in conservative circles and among the local press during the latter part of 1953. One was mailed to Frank Chodorov, an associate editor of the conservative publication *Human Events*. Chodorov said that he was interested in using Bob's article about the Girl Scouts if Bob would permit him to edit down his documentary. Bob gave him carte blanche authority to do so and the result was an article titled "Even the Girl Scouts" in the March 31, 1954 edition of *Human Events*. It took conservatives around the country by storm and set off a national protest regarding the content of the Girl Scout *Handbook*.

Suddenly Bob's name was in the wire service stories as the man who had been picking on little girls. But before the matter ended, the National Council recalled the 1953 edition of the *Handbook* and reissued it. The sections Bob had called attention to were either deleted or revised. This minor episode made Bob's name well-known across the country.

Bob's increasing prominence and position as a television news director gave him entree to many celebrities. One of these was Senator Joe McCarthy.

Bob had always been enthusiastic about McCarthy's role as a leading anti-communist fighter, and he looked forward to interviewing him and having the session filmed for later showing on "The World Today." After a normal introduction, Bob asked him a few routine questions about his on-going probe of communist influence in the government. Then he put the following question to McCarthy.

"Senator, you have done an outstanding job of establishing that there is, in fact, a threat of communism in the government. But, I wonder, Sir, is this enough? Do you plan to stop with this? It's been my experience that many Americans don't really know what communism is. They identify it with Russia or with something that is bad, but they really aren't aware of what it means. What do you think of establishing some sort of educational institution so that we not only learn WHO the communist sympathizers are, but additionally, learn WHAT communism is trying to do?"

McCarthy leaped to his feet and with a clenched fist pounded on the table top. "No! No! No!" he roared. "No education! You have to expose! expose! expose!"

Bob was unnerved. It was as though his question had caused McCarthy to have an apoplectic fit. Due to problems in developing the film and in view of the fact that McCarthy had reacted so vehemently, Bob and his station manager decided not to air the interview with McCarthy.

Despite McCarthy's emphasis on exposing communist influence in government, ever since his conversation with Stephenson and exposure to Hoiles, Bob was more and more coming to believe that education was the most important weapon in the anti-communist arsenal. After all, he reasoned, if you didn't know WHAT communism was, how could you identify WHO the communists were?

After Bob had been at WFTL-TV long enough to realize that he should have stayed in Miami, Merwin K. Hart, head of the right-wing National Economic Council, contacted him about a job offer in New York City. Hart promised jobs for Ruth, Edith, and Marji, as well as Bob, and was quite anxious for them all to come north. So Bob and his extended family left Fort Lauderdale in May of 1954, and settled in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Within a week they were situated in offices near those of the National Economic Council in the Empire State Building and were ready to work. Bob had understood that he would be broadcasting for the NEC on some radio station in the city. As it turned out, Merwin Hart had no intention of buying radio time. Rather, he expected Bob to get on the air because of his status as a celebrity (a la the Girl Scout affair) or because he would very quickly be hired as a staff news man. It was then that Bob discovered that in New York City he was "just another radio and TV hopeful," whereas in Florida he had been well-known - a "big fish in a small pond."

Other than looking for air time, Bob had little actual work to do. Since he knew the people at the Foundation for Economic Education, he decided to go out to Irvington-on-Hudson and visit with them. On this particular visit, Baldy Harper was very upset. Leonard Read had written a manuscript entitled "Government-An Ideal Concept" which had been passed around among the staff members. Baldy had

reviewed the original draft of the book and was at odds with Read's statements on some significant points.

"Look," he said to Bob. "Leonard's publishing this book against my better judgment. This is the first time he has gone against staff wishes. FEE has never endorsed any activity of government. We are against price controls, tariffs, subsidies, any government restrictions to the free market. But to come out and endorse the powers of taxation and eminent domain, as he has done, is to grant the government the power to confiscate or seize any and all private property in the country. Nothing would be safe."

"But doesn't the government need the power to condemn land in order to build roads?" asked Bob.

"Not necessarily," answered Baldy thoughtfully. "Why couldn't the government buy the property or right of ways just like anyone else? No one can be trusted with the power to steal. Why that's what it amounts to! If I come up to you with a gun and demand your watch, and then pay you what I think it's worth, how does that differ in any essential way from what the government does when it exercises its power of eminent domain? And if we give the government the power to tax, how do we limit it? Taxation and eminent domain are just different sides of the same coin. What's the difference if the government takes as much money as it deems necessary from us, whether we agree to it or not, or if it simply condemns our property and pays us what it chooses?"

"The whole problem, Bob, is that I am not sure there is such a thing as an ideal concept of government. Maybe the whole concept of government is a flawed one? Read has said it himself any number of times: the government is only people. So how can the government possibly do anything that people can't do for themselves? The government doesn't produce anything itself. Whatever it gets, it gets from the people in the first place. It just doesn't make sense that Read should endorse the idea of government at all, even its ideal form. Why some of us here actually are thinking that maybe 'no' government is the ultimate ideal."

However, when Baldy had requested Read to take that position in public and denounce government per se, as an obsolescent institutional device to be abandoned, Read had balked.

Baldy was convinced that the only reason for Read's reluctance to take such a position was financial. If FEE endorsed a consistent stand against government, it was likely to lose large sums of money which were being contributed to it. Few, if any, conservatives were ready to take so radical a position as to argue that government should be abandoned because it served no legitimate purpose. Rather than lose contributions, Read was compromising, as Baldy saw it.

Bob left the Foundation for Economic Education puzzled. Baldy's questions weighed heavily on his mind. Wouldn't the absence of government create all sorts of problems? But look at the problems that the government itself created, he thought. What was a consistent and logical position when it came to the question of government? He had never thought that one through.

Since Bob was not able to secure air time for his broadcasts, Merwin Hart came up with another project. He would be happy to underwrite a new organization which Bob and his staff would run. He would show Bob how to raise the money and get underway. Hart visualized something called "United States Day" and the creation of a "United States Day Committee" which would seek to have a specific day set aside to honor the U. S. Constitution. The date that the Constitution was finally ratified, October 23, would be an appropriate date.

Bob confessed to a lack of enthusiasm. He realized that flag waving wouldn't really accomplish anything. Nor did the approach of the conservatives seem to have anything more to offer him. Their "game plan" entailed trying to win elections and gain power in government so that they would have enough clout to hold the socialists at bay. But if the underlying problem dealt with government size and power, the conservative approach had to be counter-productive. How could expanding the size of government to ward off the socialist and communist threat result in reducing the size of government?

Bob expressed these thoughts to Merwin. Bob admitted that he wanted the conservatives to win, but he wanted them to win because they were right, and not because they happened to have more votes on their side. Bob was convinced that if ideas of free enterprise were correct, and if they were known

and understood, they would triumph. If the ideas were incorrect, they had no business winning anyway. Truth was what was needed, not political strength. When Merwin responded that winning was the important matter, Bob found himself losing sympathy with the National Economic Council and its political methodology.

However, Bob couldn't simply quit his job and walk out. He felt morally obligated to deliver at least something for Merwin. So offices were setup in Greenwich in order to promote "United States Day." Bob at least found himself in harmony with the idea of stressing the importance of the Constitution. The activities of a United States Day Committee could surely help to emphasize the importance of a strict construction of governmental powers under the Constitution. The U.S. Day effort was only moderately successful. Although every governor in the country was contacted, only 13 state proclamations were issued on October 23rd, in honor of the Constitution.

Bob also became active in the Congress of Freedom and was elected its Executive Director in July, 1954. This conservative group looked upon the United Nations as a blot on the national honor of the United States. Bob proposed to use their next annual convention as a forum to call attention to the evils of the United Nations. The Congress of Freedom delegates would meet in the building in San Francisco where the U.N. Charter was signed in 1945, and propose that this first embryonic attempt at world government be dismantled. 1955 would mark the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Charter.

Since Bob was devoting more and more time to the Congress of Freedom, he began looking around for new employment, revisiting all his radio contacts in New York. Finding a job was one thing, but finding one where he could still dedicate himself to the crusade was certainly another. He notified the leaders of the Congress of Freedom of his desire to leave NEC and it was through this effort that his next job was located.

One evening at home in Greenwich, Bob's telephone rang. The party on the line was Harry Hoiles, publisher of the *Gazette Telegraph* in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Thaddeus Ashby, one of the active participants in the Congress of Freedom, had been working at the newspaper as Harry's editorial page editor. Thad wanted to leave and the post would be open. Would Bob be interested in the job? Bob knew full well that he had no particular skills as a writer. He had written and published a number of items but he was far more talented as a radio or TV man. Yet, he could see himself as a writer. Thanks to his zeal as a crusader, he could see himself doing almost anything that needed to be done on behalf of his country. Could he become an editor? Certainly.

Bob and Harry discussed other conditions of employment. The pay was next to nothing. Not only would Bob have to take about a 75% reduction in pay, but the girls would be out of work, and have to find other jobs. Bob told Harry he would have to think about it and call him back.

A family discussion ensued when Bob told the others about Harry's offer. Bob finally got out the atlas to see just where Colorado Springs was located. It was nestled at the base of Pike's Peak, near the geographical center of the country. As he studied the geography, one thought kept intruding.

It seemed to him that the one objective most worthy of the best he could provide, would be the creation of a school which would concentrate on teaching economic freedom. He had been thinking about this idea for some time. Colorado Springs seemed to be a perfect location for such a venture. The scenery would be spectacular. The location would be equally inconvenient to everyone. If Bob did organize such a school, Colorado Springs was located in such a place that those who came would have to really want to be there.

Bob had discussed the idea of setting up such a school with people like Merwin K. Hart and Leonard Read. Every conservative he had ever talked to, except Joe McCarthy, had endorsed the idea in theory, but not one believed it could be carried out in practice. If the creation of an educational edifice was the Mount Everest of the cause of freedom, someone had to show that the summit could be achieved. Bob had demonstrated some ability to scale a few foothills. He had the faith to attack the peak. At any rate it was dear to him that he must make the attempt. Colorado Springs seemed an ideal place to begin.

The girls looked at Bob as if he had lost his mind, but they said that if he was moving to

Colorado with the idea of starting a school to teach about economic freedom, then they were with him. Loy had already fallen in love with Colorado on her first trip west and she looked forward to moving.

Bob called Harry to explain that he needed at least a month to arrange his affairs before he could report to work. Harry understood this requirement and accepted Bob for the job.

Before leaving New York, Bob made an appointment to see Baldy Harper again. He was the one man who had expressed the keenest interest in the idea of a school. What would Baldy think if a real freedom school were organized and set into motion?

Baldy fairly drooled at the prospect. It had been his own longtime dream. A far away look in Baldy's eyes showed what he thought could be achieved with such an instrument. He expounded on it at length.

"Baldy," Bob finally said, "would you care to teach in such an institution if it could be started?"

"It's a marvelous dream, Bob," he said. "The problem is it can't be done. So there's no point in dwelling on it."

"But suppose the money could be found, a campus provided? Would teaching at such a school interest you?"

That far away look returned to Baldy's eyes. He took some time thinking about Bob's question. "If such an institution could be created," he said quietly, "it would become the most important happening in this nation in many years. I most surely would be interested."

Bob didn't dare tell Baldy that was what he had in mind to achieve. First of all, Bob wasn't sure he could do it and in the second place, he knew what Baldy's response would be; that it couldn't be done.

No more was said about the school, but when the meeting finally ended Bob secretly vowed that if he ever was successful in putting together such an institution, that Baldy would become the kingpin, the chief teacher and spokesman, in what he had created.

The LeFevre family said good-bye to New York City and Greenwich when the October, 1954, page was torn from the calendar.

“It [freedom philosophy] does not concern itself with what kind of world we might have if everyone behaved in a libertarian manner. Rather, it limits itself to a study of what each individual can do if he restrains himself; disciplines himself stringently so he does not commit overt and aggressive actions; and is confident that if proper methods and means are employed no one would ever have to be embarrassed in relation to the results obtained. Liberty, then, is a direction to be taken and not a goal to be reached.” January 7, 1961

Chapter 15 – The First Year in Colorado

Colorado Springs did not let them down. Immediately to the west of the city, an enormous mountain rose with its summit snow capped. To the left and right of this monolith stretched the shoulders of the Rockies, running north and south. As the visitors drove around town and through the Garden of the Gods, visited Jackson Falls, and the world famous Broadmoor district, enthusiasm struck the family. If they were to achieve their dreams, they could not ask for a more majestic place to fulfill them.

The *Gazette Telegraph* was located on Pikes Peak Avenue. Bob reported to work, Monday, November 15, 1954. The business manager took him in to meet Harry Hoiles, the publisher. Bob’s new employer proved to be slight of build, with a clean-shaven face and eyes that never left his as they spoke. He seemed to be all business and devoid of a *sense* of humor.

Over the phone from New York, Bob had been led to believe that the writer of the editorials would be an important person on the paper’s staff. Sitting across the desk from Harry Hoiles, Bob now learned that writers were the lowest of the low, and at the bottom of the writer’s list were people who wrote editorials.

Harry laid it on the line. Bob would write what he, Harry, wanted. Since the *Gazette Telegraph* was a “Freedom” newspaper, all of Bob’s editorials were to be written about freedom. Everything Bob wrote, if Harry were to approve it, would have to support the concept of humans as free beings.

Bob felt as if he were already under suspicion, not because he had done something wrong, but because he wanted to write. Harry let him know that without exception, the people he had employed at various times in the job Bob was undertaking, tended to be lazy. He wouldn’t tolerate that. Bob was to write, and if he wasn’t writing he was to study, read, learn, and then write some more. It also became crystal clear that there would be nothing of the “cult of the personality” insofar as the job was concerned. To Bob’s particular distress, he discovered that his name would not even appear on the editorial page. He was to be an invisible man, a ghost who expressed the views that Harry held.

Bob felt it only fair to set the record straight, so he laid things out for Harry. Bob loved his country. He was a crusader, fighting for freedom. He had accepted the job because he viewed it as a means to an end; the end being a chance to argue for and awaken a love of liberty in the ideas and ideals embodied in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. Bob explained his thinking about the free enterprise system; that he believed in the right of every human being to own his own property, to manage it as he saw fit, and to win or lose on the basis of his ability. So long as the job helped him expound on those themes, he would work like a demon. If the job didn’t permit those things, then Bob would leave. He wasn’t in love with the newspaper. His mistress was liberty and it was that celestial being he sought to serve.

Harry nodded. Bob received the impression that his response had been satisfactory. Yet still Harry had no smile, and seemed to have no warmth.

Later that day, when Bob talked to the family at their new home, he expressed some dismay at the personality of his new boss. “He’s a tough minded, tight-fisted fighter for every idea he believes to be correct.”

Ruth was immediately on Bob’s side. “Do you think you can get along with him?” she asked.

“Frankly,” Bob said, “I don’t know. Harry is a tough nut.” “Maybe you ought to quit at once and

we'll all go somewhere else."

"We're in no position to do that," Bob said. "We laid out a lot of money to rent this place. And we've spent quite a bit just driving out here. We're stuck. This one has to work."

There were expressions of disappointment and concern. "Maybe you've made a mistake, Bob," Edy commented.

"It's sure possible," Bob admitted. "I've made lots of them. But there is something else. I know it. I'm not sure how good a writer I am. I have written a few good things. I know I'm going to have to work hard every day, but I'll produce. Harry will at least find out that I'm not lazy like the other writers he has had. And I can learn. Harry knows a lot and seems perfectly willing to teach. So? I don't have to like him and he doesn't have to like me. But he's going to like what I do. He's looking for an end result and I'm going to give it to him."

"Is there anything I can do to help?" Ruth asked.

"You'll be the first to know if there is. Gals, we're going to have to make this one work."

The conversation ended, but Bob's thoughts went on. A small persistent nudge deep within him kept repeating, "I need Harry." If the truth were known, Harry was exactly what was called for. And curiously, Bob found himself taking a liking to Harry. He was tough. But there was a basic fairness. Harry came across as the kind of person who stated things honestly and fairly.

During Bob's first week at the paper, he acted like a man possessed. The previous editorial writer had left about a one week's supply of unused editorials. These were being used while Bob worked on writing. Carefully he prepared his first editorial, which would appear on Tuesday (November 23, 1954) of the following week. Bob struggled with it and finally took it to Harry for approval. Harry read it, responded with a nearly imperceptible nod and asked what else Bob had ready. Bob told him that he was still working on the other articles and fielded a stony stare as he went back to his desk.

Bob made it a rule to be at his desk early each morning. He needed to have two full length editorials (about 800 words each) ready for every issue of the paper, which was published seven days a week. Occasionally Harry would write his own editorial or run one he particularly liked taken from another Freedom paper. But with this kind of output demanded, Bob slaved to string the words together around an idea. Harry wanted short, terse copy; protein words, lean and target-centered. Again and again Bob would take copy in to Harry, who would read it in his own good time. Then he'd call Bob back and talk to him about something in it he didn't approve, and Bob would have to re-write it.

Harry seemed never to forget anything. He would trip Bob up on one inconsistency after another. His understanding of the implications of human freedom was prodigious. If Bob wrote that the government was out of line in taxing the poor with disregard for their well-being, it would probably be approved. But if two or three weeks later, Bob implied that a tax on someone with more money was all right, Harry would ask him to define "poor." Which person was "poor" and which one wasn't?

When Bob suggested that he was poor, and that Harry wasn't, Harry wanted to know if the comparison wasn't being based on a very loose use of terms without proper definition. Compared to any number of people, Harry was poor. Bob was poor compared to him, but Harry was poor compared to others. Harry wanted to know where one drew the line.

Gradually Bob began to see the principle that Harry was sustaining. It had little to do with being "rich" or "poor." It had to do with the right of the individual to do his best with whatever was his, whether that was a lot or a little. Rich and poor were value words having no precise meanings.

At the newspaper, in addition to writing editorials, Bob took over the responsibility of editing the entire editorial page. The number of editorials he had to alter or rewrite diminished. He became more aware of local affairs as he became part of the community and this contributed to the timeliness of his writing.

One item of local and business interest had to do with the *Gazette Telegraph's* competition. Colorado Springs was one of the few, relatively-small cities which had competing newspapers. The GT's circulation was about 25,000. *The Free Press*, its competition, had a smaller circulation and was owned and operated by the International Typographical Union (ITU), which also maintained the Old

Printers Home in the city. After Hoiles had acquired the *Gazette Telegraph*, the ITU had brought a strike action against the newspaper in January, 1947. The union had been opposed so successfully by the Hoiles' management that even with a picket line, the paper gained in circulation and advertising.

After six fruitless months of picket lines, the union decided to change tactics. It started *The Free Press*, hoping it would act as "a strike weapon." The strike never was settled, but the union paper continued to be printed. Bob was instructed by Harry to do his best in keeping the public informed that *The Free Press* wasn't a true newspaper and that it hadn't been organized for that purpose. *The Free Press* was a colossal money loser. To make up its operating deficits, the union was assessing its own rank and file members.

Even in the face of such competition, Harry would often take stands that he knew in advance would be unpopular. He was concerned primarily that his position was right in respect to the concept of freedom. Then he would go ahead. Much to Bob's amazement and delight, the *Gazette Telegraph* published his editorials showing what a gigantic boondoggle the new Air Force Academy construction was. Beginning with a request for 10,000 acres, the Academy ended up with over 17,000 acres. The city fathers, the merchants, and most of the important people in town wanted the Academy with all the dollars the federal government would bring into the region. Bob and Harry took the side of the American taxpayers, who were being compelled to pay for this expensive and extravagant construction.

Harry believed that only the truth was sacred. He ran the paper in such a way that editorial opinion was kept out of the news stories. Often, indeed, reporters were upset by the editorial position of the paper. But Harry believed that the editorial page was to be set aside for opinion and the rest of the paper was to deal in facts. As editor of the editorial page, Bob recited the story of what was happening to this country under the onward march of government. Newspapers in other communities would have considered subjects like compulsion in the public school system, the violence of unions, and the unconstitutionality of United States' participation in the U.N. untouchable.

This period of Bob's life, particularly after Ruth joined the newspaper, was a time of learning and development. He would write his editorials, and Ruth would ask questions and debate with him on every issue. So would Harry, when necessary.

The newspaper began with a fundamental premise: namely that individuals exist, and that no one but the individual person is able to control his or her own energies. In short, the editorial position of the paper paralleled Rose Wilder Lane's book, *The Discovery of Freedom*, which argued that freedom is self-control, no more, no less. This meant that if each person took care to exercise control over his or her person and property, then freedom would come about without the interference of any outside agency or institution. Freedom would come about as the result of a natural process. Of course, the newspaper did not favor any kind of meddling in the peaceful and productive pursuits of anyone. That meant that it disapproved of government intrusion and intervention.

The *Gazette Telegraph* billed itself as "Colorado's most consistent newspaper." This meant that Bob had to establish a consistent position with respect to government. Indeed this was the most difficult problem that he faced. Brought up from childhood in government schools, he was conditioned to believe that the three necessary functions of government were to provide police, court system, and army. And to insure that such services existed, government was given the power to tax anyone and everyone within its jurisdiction. But Harry had shown Bob, and indeed Bob had been stressing in his editorials, that there was nothing that the government could do that the private sector or free enterprise could not do more efficiently. And both Bob and Harry firmly believed that private enterprise was certainly more moral than government service. Private enterprise rested on voluntaryism and the consent of the customer, while government rested on involuntaryism and coercion.

Did consistency demand free enterprise take over all functions of government? Could private companies provide protection on the market? In fact, these questions reminded Bob of the last two conversations he had had with Baldy regarding Leonard Read's *Government — An Ideal Concept*. If all the services government provided could be offered by competing companies in a free market, then, perhaps, Baldy had been right. Maybe governments were superfluous? Maybe there was no logical

justification for them?

Bob resisted reaching that conclusion for some time, yet he was impelled by the logic of the argument. Political governments rested on force and the initiation of force was clearly wrong, whether weighed against the Biblical injunctions not to steal and kill, or the Golden Rule. Self-government was clearly proper, and forceful, outside control over individuals was not. Everywhere LeFevre and Hoiles looked, forceful, artificial governments had made a mess. They certainly weren't accomplishing their goal of protection from crime. So the more Bob thought, the more he had to yield to the conclusion that there was nothing free enterprise couldn't do more morally and efficiently than political governments.

Bob was slowly attaining some measure of logical thinking when the telephone rang one morning. Aunt Coral, from East Aurora, New York, was on the line. Ethel, Bob's mother, was dying. She couldn't come to the phone, but she was calling for Bob from her bed. It was an emergency. Would he please come at once?

Without hesitating, Bob agreed and raced off to tell Harry of the crisis. Bob told him that he needed a few days off to go to New York to see his ailing mother, and asked if he could take a short vacation.

Harry took the occasion to sit Bob down and give him a discourse on the subject of basic honesty and devotion to duty. Bob could hardly believe it. As Harry talked, Bob perceived what was wrong. Harry didn't believe he was telling the truth. He thought Bob just wanted to get a few days off.

Finally Bob said, "Harry, I don't think you believe me. My mother is dying and I will go to see her. I don't want to lose my job, but if that's what this time off is going to cost, so be it. I'm going to go."

"You understand that I won't pay you for the time you're away?"

Bob was seething. "I'm not asking to be paid for work I haven't done. And if you care to, I'll give you my aunt's number so you can call her and verify the facts."

Harry thought about that. Reluctantly he agreed to give Bob an unpaid break.

Bob's mother died that same day, December 12, 1954, before he could get a flight out to Buffalo. The trip east was a sad interlude. Bob had thought he could attend the funeral without a tear, but when he saw his mother in her casket, there was no way he could manage it. She had been marvelous to him, lavishing affection on him as a child. Bob was the principal beneficiary of her will.

On Bob's return to the paper, he found himself once again caught up in the discipline of the daily demand for editorials. The girls had obtained jobs, Tommy was enrolled in school, and Loy made a home for the family. Nights were usually spent toiling on the arrangements for the Congress of Freedom convention. The Congress had managed to obtain the Veteran's War Memorial Building, where the U.N. Charter had originally been signed. The big meeting was scheduled in San Francisco for April, 1955.

Everything was progressing smoothly, until one day toward the end of 1954, Bob received a call from Thad Ashby, in San Francisco. Thad had suggested him for the editor's job, and was active in the Congress of Freedom. After an exchange of pleasantries, Thad finally said, "What are you planning on doing during the convention, Bob?"

The question made no sense. "What am I going to do? Why I'm going to be there running the show. I am still Executive Director, aren't I?"

"Yes, but you can't come back here to San Francisco. Haven't you seen the report put out by Retail Credit?"

"Retail Credit! What have they got to do with me? Sure, I had some financial difficulties with The Jefferson Hotel, and went bankrupt. My credit probably isn't too good back there, but what has that got to do with the convention?"

"It's not just your credit. It's the other things you've done. It's got everything about the 'I Am,' and something about a 'Mankind United,' whatever that is. You might have thought you covered your tracks, but they dug everything up. Your connection with subversive organizations and all."

"Do you have a copy of that report? I think I better see it. It sounds pretty bad."

The document was an interesting blend of fact and fiction. But what was most enlightening was

that it had been prepared just prior to the primary election in 1950, at the request of Jack Hardy, Bob's Republican opponent.

Suddenly, Bob understood why so many of his friends and well-wishers had dropped him like a hot potato during the campaign; why nearly all of his support had disappeared; and why the Republican endorsement in his favor had been withdrawn and given to Hardy.

His former careers had been unearthed, but they had not been set forth in an unbiased manner. Virtually every statement was in the form of an accusation. Bob realized that if Harry Hoiles ever got his hand on the document, it would confirm every suspicion that he ever harbored about writers. Bob would be summarily discharged.

Bob thought the prudent thing to do was to show Harry the report himself. Bob marched into Harry's office and laid the report on his desk. "This is terribly important, Harry. Thad Ashby sent it to me from San Francisco. It's a report that Retail Credit issued. Some of it is true. In fact, I've told you about most of what is in there except for the things that aren't true."

Bob also explained that the report had been issued in 1950, and that until this moment he had never seen it. But no one could possibly know how far it had gone or into whose hands it had fallen.

Later that day, Harry summoned Bob back into his office. His countenance was darker than usual. Bob had to go over the report with him, sentence by sentence. The most damning item had to do with Bob's alleged work for Mankind United, which Bob denied flatly. Harry didn't like that. He was sure Retail Credit would have never put that item in unless there was some basis in fact to it. Just before this most unpleasant meeting ended, Harry said, "You will have to get Retail Credit to retract this report."

"They'll never do that willingly, Harry. Some of the report is true. Why should they retract it?"

"If they don't, I will have to dispense with your services here."

Bob didn't like that, but at least he could understand it. He wouldn't have wanted to employ a man like that described by Retail Credit either.

"We're coming up on that meeting in San Francisco for the Congress of Freedom. I'm going to San Francisco. Let me see what I can do with Retail Credit while I'm there. I will attempt to get a retraction."

"If what you are telling me is true," Harry said, "you have grounds for a legal action for libel and slander."

"You want me to file suit?"

Harry looked at Bob and said in a strong voice. "Get a retraction. If Retail Credit will provide it without a lawsuit, fine. If not, you must sue. And you must prove in court, what you have just tried to prove to me."

Bob took a deep breath. "All right, Harry. I'd hate to drag this into court because of all the silly things I did in my early life. I'd be made to look like an idiot. But in its most damning area, this report is false. If I can't get a retraction any other way, then I'll sue."

At home, the family was shaken over the Retail Credit report. Ruth decided to phone her mother to see if some of her extensive influence might be brought to bear so that Retail Credit would back away from the document. Within two weeks Ruth's mother reported that the most that they would agree to do was to stop issuing the report. So far as Retail Credit was concerned the information was factual. The report had been issued years ago, no one had ever challenged it, and they had no intention of making any retractions now. That seemed to leave Bob no alternative, if he wanted to keep his job at the *Gazette Telegraph*. On January 26, 1955, his attorney filed a suit against Retail Credit claiming \$500,000 in damages.

Bob hired the attorney, Aaron Sargent, at the recommendation of Bob Donner, a wealthy conservative whom Bob knew in Colorado Springs. Sargent was an avid anti-communist, and both he and Donner believed that Bob's political opponents had gone to Retail Credit in the first place because Bob had made no secret of his own antagonism toward communism. Since Bob did not have the money to pay Sargent, Donner agreed to advance the funds and let Bob pay him back over several years.

Sargent informed Bob that it would take about two years before his suit would move off the docket and into the court room.

As April rolled around, the final arrangements were being made for the Congress of Freedom. Bob took off for San Francisco. Loy drove Ruth and Marji out, and Edy chauffeured her own car. Bob depended on them because Ruth, Marji, and Edy had really put the Congress together for him. Loy had held everything else together.

The Congress of Freedom, which ran from April 26 - 30, 1955, was a smashing success. There were a host of able speakers, including V. Orval Watts, the man who had done so much toward awakening an understanding of economic affairs in Bob's mind, and Westbrook Pegler, the well-known columnist. The major theme of the convention was "get the United States out of the United Nations" and "get the United Nations out of the United States."

The only distressing note at the convention concerned Bob's reelection as Executive Director. Bob had intended to vacate his post as Executive Director until he discovered that the man he thought might be his best replacement, John Hart, had begun to denounce him and call for his impeachment. Apparently the Retail Credit report must have fallen into Hart's hands, and Hart was doing all he could behind the scenes to have Bob declared "persona non grata." Bob wanted no such mark against him and wished to stymie the political attempt to oust him.

The family, and Bill Johnson, whom Bob knew from Spiritual Mobilization, had a discussion about the proper course of action to be taken. Ruth wanted Bob to resign at once. Bill Johnson had some different ideas. He suggested winning re-election as Executive Director and then resigning. That would vindicate Bob to some extent and allow him to vacate his post in honor. Bob seriously doubted if he could continue in that position anyway, because his workload at the *Gazette Telegraph* was taking up so much of his time.

The by-laws of the Congress required that immediately following the convention, the annual meeting and election of officers be held. Following the advice given by Bill Johnson, Bob worked for his re-election, won, and then tendered his resignation.

Upon their return to Colorado Springs, they found that their rent had been doubled because the tourist season was beginning. Bob started searching the want ads for some other location. One Sunday he saw an ad for a large piece of property in Cascade, a suburb of the Springs located part way up Pikes Peak. It turned out that this was just what they had been looking for. There was a large house, constructed of whole, native logs and a smaller cabin. The property was owned by Alice Leck. The rent was just slightly more than they had been paying at Elm Street, so this is where the family spent its first summer in Colorado Springs.

“Persons who believe in liberty will uphold the right of the individual to make wrong choices, not because he agrees with the wrong choices, but only because in this way can the individual become a moral and self-controlling person. Only in this way can he learn to govern himself.” March 30, 1961

Chapter 16 – Freedom School —The Genesis and Development

In August, 1955, word came from the attorney handling his mother’s estate that the will had passed probate, and Bob would be receiving a \$4000 inheritance. Perhaps with this nest-egg, the time had come to establish the school. The idea, though dormant, had never been far from his thoughts.

Bob broached the topic with the family. What would be required? Only one procedure had ever been successful for Bob. If he could find a large building with a reasonable amount of land, and if the parcel could be purchased for as little as \$4000 down, they could all move into that building (as they had lived together in guest houses in San Francisco and Los Angeles). Bob said that he was thinking of something like a dude ranch that would operate during the summer months. They could offer a two week vacation in a mountain setting, with the schooling thrown in for a bonus. People would come to experience life in the mountains, and they could be taught in spite of themselves. The atmosphere of such a campus would be conducive to scholarly thinking. Students would be charged for room and board, and this income would help make the school self-supporting.

When Bob explained his plans to his boss, he reminded Harry that he was a crusader for liberty, not a newspaperman, and also that he was delighted with his position at the paper because it allowed him to continue his crusade. Bob proposed to Harry that he would continue doing his work as before, but that he wanted to be excused in the afternoons. He stressed that his output would not suffer; hopefully it would improve. He would use his free afternoons to develop the school and to devote himself to teaching. To make it worthwhile to Harry, Bob volunteered to take a cut in pay. Harry would lower his costs without lowering the quality of his editorial pages.

Harry listened, and finally nodded. “I’ll think about it. I’ll get back to you.”

With other people, such a statement would have been a brush off. But not with Harry. If he had disapproved, he would have said so. Further when he said he would think about it, and get back to him he would do just that.

A week passed and Harry finally called Bob back into his office. This time he smiled and asked Bob to sit, which was unusual. “To build a school,” Harry began, “will take a lot of money. You don’t have any. What makes you think you can get the money?”

Bob gulped. “I don’t know that I can, Harry.” He took a deep breath. “I’ve put together a mail list. I began it when I was in Florida and we have about 3,000 names of some of the best conservatives in the country. I’ve corresponded and talked to quite a few of them. I’ll let them know what I’m doing and try to get their support.”

“What makes you think they’ll give it?”

“I don’t know that they will. Some of them probably will. I’m sure all of them won’t.”

Bob gripped the arm of his chair. “Here’s the way I look at it, Harry. I’ll be getting \$4000 from my mother’s estate. If I don’t try now, I’ll always believe that there was something I might have done that I didn’t do. And I don’t want that on my conscience. The country is coming apart. Free enterprise is almost unheard of in our schools and colleges. You know that.

“I think I can do something about it. I’d rather try and fail, than not try. At least that way I’ll know I did the best I could. I’ll have to be content with that.”

Harry nodded. “All right. Let’s suppose you get all the money you need. Frankly, I doubt it. But let’s suppose you have the money. What makes you think you can get anyone to come out here to Colorado Springs to sit in your classes to learn about free enterprise?”

Again Bob had to respond in the negative. "I don't know that I can get anyone out here. But I have the same problem. What if I could, and then didn't try? I'd always believe that I could have done it, but that I was unwilling to try it."

Another nod. "Very well. Let me suppose you have the money and the students. What makes you think you could teach them?"

"You've got me again, boss. I don't know that either. I'm not a teacher. But I know something about free market economics. I think I can communicate verbally as well as I do in writing, and probably better. If I can manage some of it, I'm sure I can find others who will work with me in that area. There are plenty of free market exponents around who can't find work. Of course, I can't afford anyone at the outset, so I'd plan on doing the teaching at first. If I don't try, I'll never find out if I can do it or not."

This time Harry smiled. "Do you have a place in mind?"

"No, I don't," Bob admitted. "But I wasn't even going to start looking if you disapproved. I'm not asking you to guarantee my efforts. I'm only asking you to let me have the time so I can try. And you'll be saving money." That last was Bob's trump card.

Harry continued to sit at his desk, nodding, apparently to himself. Eventually he said, "Very well. You can have the time. But there is one part of your proposition that I won't approve. You'll receive the same pay as before. You'll be doing the same amount of work. If I find that it distracts and prevents you from doing your job, it will have to stop."

At home the girls were impressed. "Harry's a strange man," Loy said. "He seems so cold, so detached."

"I know," Bob agreed. "It's disconcerting. But I'll tell you something. Harry is absolutely okay. He's tough. He has to be. But he never leaves you in the dark. You can believe him. If he tells you something, that's the way it is. He doesn't shift positions. He's solid as a rock."

The search for land took Bob all over Colorado Springs. His plan demanded living quarters for six people at the outset. Everywhere he looked, the warning cry was the same. Check on the water table. Don't take land, however attractive, until you are certain water can be found on it or provided in some way.

Eventually a real estate agent called him and wanted Bob to look over a half section of land (320 acres) owned by a Denver family in the Rampart Range between Palmer Lake and Larkspur. It contained several cabins in questionable condition. The land was situated at a point where Plum Creek crossed it from the high mountains on its way to the Platte River. The owners had turned this one-half square mile into a game refuge and called their holding "Glenrose Park."

The next Sunday the family drove to the location. Everyone's eyes lighted up. Finally Marji looked at Bob and said, "This time, LeFevre, you've struck twelve." She was right. This property was just what they had been searching for.

The site was magnificent. At the gate and along the creek bottom, the land was approximately 7,000 feet above sea level. Most of it was wooded with a secondary growth of Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine. More than 250 acres was steep, and virtually impenetrable because of the dense forest growth. Within a quarter-mile of the main road, the land rose to 8,000 feet above sea level. Plum Creek gurgled and splashed across the flat meadowland. Wild roses and banks of flowers grew profusely. Nearly half a mile removed from the entrance were the cabins, snuggled into the slopes, each on its own relatively level spot of ground.

But what about the housing? No claim had been made to represent the cabins as livable. Bob had been furnished a key by the realtor, but an ordinary skeleton key would have served just as well. All the cabins were painted yellow. They weren't attractive, but they were there. The two largest cabins had solid stone and concrete foundations. The larger of the two was a two story affair with a bedroom, storage room, porch and bathroom on the first floor. On the second floor there were two rooms, one a kitchen with a wood stove, and the other a room about 18 feet by 12 feet with a fine stone fireplace. There was no central heating, but with some modifications it could be habitable.

The second largest structure was only a single story. It housed three rooms and one fair sized

front porch. There was a bathroom, with a john and wash basin in the basement, but no place to bathe. No furnace and no fireplace, nor any place to cook. The other buildings were in various states of decay. No foundation, no insulation, no interior finishing of any kind. Each had one electric bulb dangling from the ceiling. No plumbing or heating.

As they explored further, their hopes sank. They found that there was no well. Water had been pumped directly out of Plum Creek and piped some three hundred feet up hill to a 5000 gallon holding tank. Additional piping carried the water by gravity to the two larger cabins. All the pipes were above ground. With the coming of winter, the first freeze would wreak havoc with the water system.

They realized that the very first requirement, if they purchased the property, would be to dig a well, probably near the creek where they would be virtually certain of finding underground water. Then a complete pressure system would have to be installed. The pipes would have to be buried a good four feet underground to protect them from freezing. It was either that, or forget taking up residence.

At last they returned to the car and sat in silence. "Well, we've all had a good look," Bob said. "The real estate agent thinks we could buy it for as little as \$4000 down. The full price is \$32,000, which works out to \$100 per acre. The first payment of principal, interest, insurance, and taxes would be due one year after we make the purchase."

"I'm for it," Ruth said at once, "with only one proviso. Bob you have to promise me that the first priority is going to be a bathtub. I will not live in the woods for a whole winter with other people, none of us bathing."

The die was cast and the deal was made in September, 1955. "Glenrose Park" was purchased in Bob and Loy's name, using the inheritance he received from his mother's estate. Bob's idea was to form a corporation so that the property would not be held personally, but there was no time to do this before making the purchase. Remembering what he had learned from the organization of the U.S. Day Committee, Bob tried to draw together a group of trustees, selected from among the prominent conservatives that he knew, but he failed. The idea of establishing a school was just too foolhardy in their eyes. Furthermore, the attack against him in San Francisco, based on the Retail Credit report, had tarnished his reputation.

The family couldn't move onto the property until the water system had been improved. There was no money to pay for this work, but in Colorado Springs, Bob knew of a small businessman, Bill Froh, who operated the Enterprise Tent and Awning Company. Bill had had a run-in with the local authorities over a sign display and had fought them to a standstill. Bob had written an editorial in his support but had never met Froh.

Bob walked into his store one afternoon and introduced himself. He spelled out his dream. He also spelled out his lack of money. Despite the fact that Bill was a complete stranger until that moment, Bob asked if he would co-sign a note at the bank in the sum of \$2000. That was about as brassy an act as Bob had ever performed.

Bill hardly hesitated. For a brief moment he stared. Then he grinned at Bob and offered his hand and said, "Sure."

With Bill's signature, Bob took out the loan and hired a couple of men from Palmer Lake to put in a well and the necessary ditches for piping. Bob was most fortunate in his selection of workers. One of the men whom he hired was named Norris Romack. There was hardly a chore Bob could mention that Norris couldn't perform. He was a plumber, an electrician, and a carpenter. And he wasn't kidding. Best of all, he wasn't afraid of hard work; the sight of a pick and shovel didn't discourage him. With Norris at the helm, the entire plumbing system and well was put in so skillfully that there was never a moment's trouble with it. The cost was under \$1000.

Someone advertised a used bathtub for sale. Bob bought it, and after a variety of problems getting it out to the "Park," Bob was at last able to fulfill his promise to Ruth. But there was much more to be done to both cabins before the family moved in.

Norris installed a boiler for hot water, constructed partitions to make new rooms, installed the tub in the newly created bathroom, and did various other handy work to make the girls' cabin livable. In

the larger cabin, he showed them how to put up furring, and Norris put a second boiler in place. Bob and his angels did the painting and papering, necessary to fix up the interiors of both cabins.

Meanwhile, Bob had been giving full service at the paper every morning, but worked every afternoon on the property. Marji had managed to land a job at a hospital in Denver and spent more time than anyone else commuting. Sometime later, after the *Gazette Telegraph* moved into its new building (July, 1957), Ruth applied for a job as Harry's secretary. She obtained the position and before long demonstrated her superior ability as an editorial assistant. When Bob had finished a page, she would go over it, finding ways of improving or correcting it. Then the page would go to Harry's desk.

Where was the school? Bob dreamed of classrooms and dormitory buildings, and maybe even a library and auditorium, but these existed only in his imagination. The family had a meeting to discuss their progress. Even though they now were living on the property, they had used up the loan which Bill Froh had made possible. Bob spoke up first. "We've got to build a minimum of three buildings to start. The first will abut our large cabin and have a classroom and recreation room for students.

"In addition, we'll put in two residence cabins, each with room to sleep four. One cabin will be for the men; the other for women. That seems to be the bare minimum we can get away with if we are really going to get a school going here. I figure all that will run us \$7000. I've talked to an old mountain man named Charlie Heits and he's willing to supply the logs and the labor for construction."

Bob stood there and surveyed the situation. "Unless someone has a better idea, I'm going to approach some of the people we know in Colorado Springs and see if they'll support us."

Edy shook her head again. "It's your show, Bob. But you really do stick your neck out."

"I don't like it any more than you," he admitted. "But I don't see any other way out except to give up."

"We surely can't do that," Marji said. "It's a gamble, but so has everything else we've done."

"I'll bet we can do it," Loy said. "Everything we've done so far has been impossible anyway."

The next day, Bob asked for and got an appointment with Harry Hoiles. Bob spelled out the need for money to construct cabins for the school. He explained about the loan co-signed by Bill Froh and what that money had been spent on. Harry refused to guarantee any loan at the bank. His dad had always advised him to never co-sign a note for anyone. However, after a few days of thought, Harry agreed to make a personal loan to Bob and Loy, accepting a second deed of trust on the property as security. If Harry had not already won Bob's respect, he did so now by helping the cause of the school.

Bob felt that before he could ask for any more "outside" money, simple honesty demanded turning the property over to a corporation formed specially for the purpose of creating and running a school. An attorney who handled the incorporation advised them that there must be a board of directors. The three girls, and, of course, Loy were agreeable, but if this was to be more than a family affair, Bob had to bring in some people from the outside. He approached Bob Rapp, a conservative who lived on a ranch outside the Springs. He was willing to serve, as was Bill Froh. The lawyer proceeded to draw up a non-profit corporation called, The Freedom School, Inc. which was officially incorporated on February 17, 1956. Bob and Loy formally deeded Glenrose Park to the new corporation. In return they took a non-interest bearing note for \$4,000, which the corporation could redeem at any time it had the financial wherewithal to do so.

Bob next prepared a brochure which went out to several thousand conservatives across the country, and the return mail brought in a small number of \$ 5 and \$10 contributions, barely enough to pay for the mailing itself. One day Bob received an envelope from Reno Sales. Bob thought this was a pseudonym, until he opened the envelope and out fell a check for \$1000 signed by Reno Sales, himself. Bob nearly jumped out of his chair as he rushed to show Ruth the check. "We will succeed," he said. "I'm sure of it now." Sales was a well-known geologist who worked with Anaconda Copper in Montana. He had retired as a man of means and somehow Freedom School appealed to his interests. Bob hoped for many more contributions like that, but they were not forthcoming.

In order to save money, Bob and Loy, and the girls engaged in a number of do-it-yourself projects, sometimes under the supervision of Norris Romack. With Norris' guidance, they took the used

lumber from the older cabins and constructed a 20 by 60 foot barn, with a second floor storage area for feed and hay. Another time they attempted to fell a number of large trees from the building site for a new cabin. In Norris' absence, all they managed to do was to land a tree on the electric wires, strung between two of the existing cabins. Fortunately, only minor damage was done.

Bob decided to use the day of the nation's birthday, July 4, 1956, as a time to celebrate all they had accomplished. He extended an invitation for a picnic and fireworks at the ranch to all the people who had befriended them and who had participated in helping with the work at Freedom School. The entire Rapp family came, as did Mr. and Mrs. Bill Froh. Rufus Porter, who had been a prospector during his early years up in Cripple Creek and Telluride, also came. He was something of a celebrity, and was known as "the hard-rock poet." He was accompanied by his wife, and regaled everyone with his marvelous stories. The biggest thrill of all had occurred the evening before when Daisy Mae, a mare that had been donated to the school, foaled. Her filly was named Liberty Belle, for the holiday and everyone took her birth as a happy omen of fruitfulness.

Using the money he had obtained from Harry and the large contribution from Reno Sales, Bob was now ready to begin the construction of the classroom/recreation building. Norris poured the foundation after the land was cleared, and Charlie Heits started hauling logs to the site. Bob also had Norris put a slab down in the meadow, near the barn. This would be the floor of a six car garage which Bob planned to build. Using the lumber left over from the cabins, he, Loy, and the girls would provide all the labor.

Bob also arranged for propane gas service. Instead of trying to heat the two cabins the family lived in with fireplaces, they put in space heaters, and the wood stove was retired from the kitchen and replaced by a gas range. The first winter had been too rough to repeat without these amenities.

Since the family's purpose was the establishment and operation of a school which would teach and sustain the principles of a free market, they wanted no government favors, no federal funds, no help of any kind from the state. At the same time they wanted to avoid as many governmental interferences in the school's affairs as possible so Bob made sure that they were not in contravention of any government legislation. He wished to avoid all possible government restrictions and exactions, but he was not ready to operate in open defiance of their regulations. Bob's decision was based on strategic rather than moral considerations. He fully anticipated that once the school was underway that government people would not applaud the substance of what he taught.

Being "gun-shy" from his San Francisco experiences, Bob decided to take out building permits for the new school buildings. When he drove to Castle Rock, the county seat, he discovered that his land was zoned as a ranch, and that according to county regulations building permits for construction on ranches was unnecessary. Nevertheless, he insisted on completing an application and submitting a check just in case the County Commissioners changed their minds.

By the early fall, Norris and his crew had completed the foundations for the other school cabins, and Charlie Heits, the log man, was ready to take over. While Charlie was working on the first building, a letter came from the County Commissioners. They had discussed the building application and had made a ruling. The 320 acres was a ranch. That was final. The school could build whatever it wanted. Bob's check was returned uncashed.

“We are convinced that when it comes to things people want, the market place can do the job less expensively and better than government can do it. And this includes the job of protecting life and property, providing roads, schools, hospitals, cemeteries, airfields and scores of other things which government presently provides. In short, as a substitute for government in doing things which are desirable and necessary, we recommend the market place.” April 7, 1961

Chapter 17 – Freedom School — The First Years

“I think there’s enough support in favor of a free enterprise system to finance our school. It seems to me that those people griping about their taxes and claiming that their businesses are being interfered with ought to support our effort. But as far as I’m concerned this is an experiment. I certainly don’t plan to do it all my life. I just want to get it started.”

“Okay, Bob,” Ruth said. “How long will it take to prove?”

“I have no idea.” Bob responded. “But let’s call it a ten-year trial run. Let’s try for 100 students a year for ten years. That way we might reach a thousand. Perhaps I can do a good enough job to convince one out of ten that free enterprise can exist without any government support or interference.

“How many really consistent people are there in the country right now favoring a totally free market position? I’ll tell you what I think. I doubt if I could find more than 20 individuals who advocate replacing political government with voluntary market institutions. Most people who say they favor free enterprise are like the people we met on that speaking tour. They want free enterprise at tax time. But they want government assistance the rest of the year.

“I’m going to offer a consistent position. The one I have been taking in my editorials at the *Gazette Telegraph*. I think it’s time we spelled out what we’re going to offer and begin trying to attract some students. Otherwise come the Spring of ‘57, we’re going to have a facility and no one to make use of it. What we need to try and do is put together a combination package. That way we will be offering a course of instruction along with a vacation at what amounts to a dude ranch. People will come because of our setting and not because we have anything of importance to teach. I want to set up a series of two-week seminars. This first year, let’s try for a total of six.

“Here’s the angle. I think quite a few people would be willing to put up tuition to help pay the tab for a student. So, I’d like to conduct a fund drive along that line. Meanwhile, let’s conduct a contest among the people who might like to come.

“I’ll rig up a little test and ask everyone interested to take it. We’ll award scholarships to those who score the highest. We’ll get all the money we can and then deal off the top. If we have enough we’ll give five scholarships. If we have more, we’ll give six, ten; however much money we can raise for that purpose. Bear in mind, too, that we’ll accept applications from those who wish to pay their own way.”

No one opposed Bob’s plan and it was decided that the full price for room and board and tuition for a two-week session would be \$150. Bob hoped to find a hundred students and put them into six groups for the summer sessions.

“Let’s think beyond this immediate moment,” Ruth said. “Suppose everything works out and we get a hundred students. Then what?”

“Well,” Bob said, “what I’m really trying to do is to prove to Baldy Harper and Leonard Read and all the others that the job can be done. I’m not a teacher. None of us has ever tried to do anything like this before. If we succeed, then I want to turn the whole thing over to some real professors. I’m thinking of Baldy. I want him to run it. But at the moment he doesn’t think it can be done.”

There was a feeling of agreement, but it went deeper than that. The whole family was beginning to feel whole-hearted enthusiasm. They were working hard and the progress was becoming more and more visible.

A new mail campaign was undertaken with two purposes; one was to raise money for scholarships; the second to attract students.

Winter had come in earnest, and by February, 1957, Heits had finished roofing the second story of the first building. A sixty-foot ridge pole, weighing half a ton, went from the fireplace on one end of the building clear to the wall at the other end. The log rafters were up and the windows were in, but the cement chink work had to be left for warmer weather. With the classroom in this condition, Bob received an application from his very first student.

A young man named Bob Richardson, living in Denver, wanted to study with him. He didn't want a scholarship and was willing to pay his own way. However, he did not want to wait till June. He wanted instruction in freedom and he wanted it right away.

By mail, the two of them worked out the details. Richardson drove down from Denver two nights each week. They used the unfinished classroom as their study. The two Bobs would sit opposite each other wrapped in parkas. On a one-to-one basis, they discussed, debated, talked and listened. LeFevre set forth the proposition that man was, by nature, a free being; that slavery was a man-made institution which resulted when someone presumed to take power over a second human being. He argued further that slavery was contrary to the nature of the slave, however beneficent it might seem to the slave master.

LeFevre demonstrated that slavery was rationalized, under the name of government and politics, because of the belief that if we didn't enslave others, they might enslave us. Such a situation could only be sustained by force and violence. On the other hand, voluntaryism or the free market would replace political government by providing only those services for which people were willing to pay. A voluntary method would be offered in place of a coercive one. This was the beginning of the Freedom School. For two or more hours per evening, with the thermometer registering below freezing, and sometimes below zero, Bob LeFevre and Bob Richardson sat in the drafty, unfinished cabin to consider philosophic and economic verities.

So passed the winter of 1956-57, in which the first school building came into being, and during which Freedom School acquired its first student. Bob continued his work at the newspaper, and was engaged in an active correspondence with people all over the country. And, he was deeply involved in all of the efforts in getting Freedom School started.

Marji continued her commute to Denver, and her physical therapist's job. Edy worked as a bookkeeper in Colorado Springs, as well as for the school. Ruth was still involved with the *Gazette Telegraph*, but much of her time was devoted to the school's secretarial work. Loy had enrolled Tommy at a country school. She drove him to school and picked him up in the afternoons, did the shopping, cooked meals, and made life cohesive and bearable for them all. Every one of these women was a vital part of what Bob was trying to accomplish. Had any one of them walked out, the entire project would have gone into a nose-dive.

To make Freedom School a functional entity took the united efforts of these five people. Bob was teacher and organizer. Bob could now see the "I Am" activity in better perspective. What made the family unique came largely out of the "I Am" training. Bob, Ruth, and Edy had been exposed to the "I Am" discipline for a number of years. The consequence was an ability to put a goal ahead of their personal feelings. How each might feel about another person in a given situation could be shunted aside in favor of achievement. It was as though the "extended" family was a spiritual unit. The common bond was their love of human freedom and their desires to expand its horizons.

Marji, without the benefit of any "I Am" training, nonetheless, had magnificent control of herself. Her instruction in physical therapy which had lasted for six years had provided her with a kind of self-mastery and detachment. Bob asked Marji to become the school librarian in her spare time. He had a personal library of about 2000 volumes and hoped to collect more as time went on.

Loy's musical background and naturally joyful disposition made up for any lack of spiritual training. She possessed a never-ending smile and was often found humming a tune as she went about her work. Though Bob was her husband, she adopted the others into her circle as though they were sisters in spirit. She never resented the presence of these other women, for they never posed any threat to her. She held Ruth, Edy, and Marji in the highest esteem. They were devoted to human freedom and the creation

of Freedom School - ideas, in other words - and not to Bob. That was the one thing that the Ballard experience had taught them. Personality cults were to be avoided at all costs.

Bob asked Loy to become the “Director of Facilities” which entailed taking charge of the kitchen, dining room, and physical amenities. At first she was staggered and alarmed, but she was a good sport and took it in stride. She had already become an excellent cook.

Bob knew each woman’s capacity and had judged correctly. What he had done without fully comprehending the ramifications of it, was to assist each one of them in accepting the goal which they shared in common, thus enabling each of them to place it above the personal relationship element.

Slowly enrollment applications came in. Enough money had been raised to provide eight scholarships. In the process, eighteen others had signed up for one of the summer sessions. Charlie Heits and his two helpers were still working on the classroom. The two cabins for men’s and women’s dormitories were still a dream.

Bob refused to believe the evidence, and thought surely that something would happen. But by mid-May, 1957, Bob knew and couldn’t deny the truth any longer. The school could provide a course of instruction. It could feed the students. But there was nowhere to house them. Those who had enrolled would have to wait for next year.

With an aching heart, Bob called the family together. He spelled out what everyone already knew. The summer sessions would have to be canceled unless they could figure out some way to house the incoming students.

After thinking intently for a few moments, Ruth finally suggested that she would give up her room for her mother, who had registered as one of the summer students. Then Edy and Marji agreed to move into the decrepit cabins while school was in session.

“Would you gals really do that?”

“Sure,” they all echoed in unison.

Bob stared at the wonderful women. “I’m in no position to do anything except marvel. I would have never thought of this solution, because it would never have occurred to me to even ask you to live in those rotten cabins. But if you girls will do it, I don’t see how we can fail. You are superb!”

So the planning went forward. In the last two weeks before the first students were scheduled to arrive, everyone scurried about attending to last minute arrangements.

Meanwhile Bob had arranged for some instructors to assist in the teaching department. Employment for those who believed in a free economy was almost non-existent, and consequently, Bob was able to obtain the services of some brilliant people by offering to pay their travel expenses, room and board, and a \$100 honorarium.

That first summer of 1957, Bob obtained the services of Leonard Read, Frank Chodorov, Percy Greaves, Baldy Harper, Jim Doenges, E. W. Bill Dykes, R. C. Hoiles, and James Rogers. It was a stellar lineup. Indeed, it was the use of their names in the earlier publicity which had made it possible for the school to attract any students at all. Bob had promised that at least one of these guest speakers would be on hand during each session.

Jim Doenges, a surgeon from Anderson, Indiana, was scheduled to be the first lecturer, when classes opened on June 3rd. In all the excitement, Bob had forgotten that he was only going to be present for two days. That meant that Bob must teach every afternoon during ten of the next twelve days. In near panic, Bob went to his room to outline ten day’s worth of instruction, six hours each day. In haste, he jotted down the major points he wanted to get across in class. There were two pages of notes. That was the beginning of what Bob called “the fundamentals of liberty.”

The first June session had four people enrolled. Somehow everything came together. The session ran from Sunday night of the first week to Friday night of the second, when “certificates of completion” were presented during a graduating ceremony. Students departed the following Saturday morning.

Since the second session was to begin Sunday evening, the place had to be “torn apart” and prepared for the next batch of students, which consisted of five people. Somehow everything was put back in order, and the sessions went smoothly throughout the summer.

Few of the guest instructors were totally consistent supporters of free enterprise, but Bob realized that he needed their assistance both in the teaching department and in helping to promote Freedom School. Leonard Read, from the Foundation for Economic Education, was aware of this. During one of his early stays at Freedom School, Read told Bob that he had never even suspected that Bob's efforts would get off the ground.

"Bob," Read said, "what you are doing here is truly outstanding. Frankly, I never thought you would get as far as offering actual classes, but you've done it. But I'm worried about your philosophic position and I'm not alone. I think you've gone too far. Some people, like myself, are concerned that you sound too much like an anarchist. We've got to have some kind of a government. Certainly, we both agree that the one we have is overly large, too powerful, and too intrusive. What we need is a 'limited' government, not 'no' government."

Bob explained his position which had slowly evolved over many years: from the early emphasis on personal responsibility passed down to him from his mother and father, to the emphasis on self-control taught by the Ballards, and his immersion in Americanism and its patriotic heritage, to his awareness of the dangers to freedom. "I beg to disagree, Leonard. I agree with orderly process. Certainly I don't favor chaos. And I do favor the idea that a person who owns something has a right to protect it. But I don't think that any government ever has or ever will serve us in preventing chaos. In many ways, I think government causes disorder and wars. All wars are started by governments.

"As for protection, I think we need protection from government, not the other way around. Governments don't seem to do a very good job of protecting us from the criminals. In fact, the government seems to be the major organized agency of violence in our society. I see individuals pretty much as you do, Leonard. In fact, I think some of the finest thinking in the world about individualism has been published by FEE. Surely, we can do better than having governments whose only significant distinction is their willingness and capacity to inflict injury on any and all. Meanwhile they turn us into collectivists."

"I've talked to a number of important people about what you're doing here," Read replied. "To make your school a success, you're going to have to raise lots of money. If you were to change your position to one more closely in harmony with mine, I could be enormously helpful to you in raising these funds. If you persist in preaching 'no' government, I can be very influential in seeing that you don't get the financing. Why don't you think that over?"

Bob was shocked. Read had virtually threatened him and it wasn't an idle threat. Read was in touch with wealthy people all over the country.

Later, after Bob had thought somewhat about their conversation, he came up to Read and said, "Leonard, I want to tell you a story, but before I do that I want to explain why I don't consider myself an anarchist. Most anarchists, particularly those from Europe during the last century, were opposed to both governments and private property. But I'm only opposed to the government because it destroys and makes impossible the existence of private property. I'm in favor of self-rule and self-government and I think it's wrong to confuse my position with that of your classical anarchist, who usually opposed private property and was thus a socialist at heart.

"But it's really the story I want to tell you. Do you remember Oliver Cromwell? According to the accounts I have read, he was an extraordinarily ugly man. He had large features, including several visible warts, the largest one being prominently located on his nose.

"According to one historian, Cromwell decided to have his portrait painted. One of Britain's renowned artists was commissioned. Now bear in mind that Cromwell had a quick and violent temper. The artist knew this.

"When Cromwell walked into the room where the artist was prepared to make the preliminary sketches, the artist got his first view of the man he was to paint. He grew pale and nearly swooned.

"Sensing the panic that his frightening visage had caused, Cromwell said, 'Yes. Paint the wart on my nose. But don't turn my whole nose into a wart.'

"That's the point I want to make with you. You see my position against government as ugly. But

as you talk to others, give me the courtesy of painting the truth. Put the wart on my nose, but don't turn my position into nothing but a wart. After all, in all the rest of my philosophy you and I are in agreement." Read roared with laughter and his good humor bubbled over.

During that first summer session of 1957, a young married couple named Gene and Marty Hausske had enrolled. Gene was employed as a draftsman at the Boeing Company in Seattle, but after attending Freedom School, he decided to get a job in Colorado Springs, and devote all his spare time to helping at the school. He and Marty, and their infant daughter, Jennie, returned to Colorado in time to join Freedom School for the 1958 school year and were a wonderful addition to the school's unofficial and unpaid staff.

The first summer was actually more successful than any one of them had anticipated. Some 27 students had completed the Freedom School course of instruction. Such an accomplishment had provided the school with an asset that Bob as yet didn't entirely understand. Their efforts had come to the attention of a number of people who were prominent in their respective communities because of their stand for free enterprise and the early, traditional American values.

Evidence of this came in the form of a telephone call from Chet Anderson, Executive Director of the Employers' Association of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Chet wondered if Bob would come to Milwaukee and meet with a number of businessmen, so Bob could relate to them what had been done at the school. Bob was delighted to have the opportunity and Harry gave him a short leave of absence.

Chet had arranged a luncheon meeting in one of the city's more prestigious clubs. Bob was awed by the caliber of the men present. Bill Grede had been president of the National Association of Manufacturers, was associated with Grede Foundries and the J. I. Case Company, and was a powerful figure with many connections. The elderly president of the big Allen-Bradley Company was also in attendance. So were presidents and managers of a dozen other major Milwaukee firms.

"What should I talk about?" Bob asked Chet. "As you know, I favor free enterprise in a totally consistent way. I don't believe that government should have anything to do with the economy. Therefore, I don't favor any taxes at all. I'm kind of hard-nosed about that. Is that what they came to hear?"

"I don't think so," Chet advised. "Why don't you just tell them what you've done? They've pretty well accepted the theories of free enterprise. They're interested in achievement."

"Well, we haven't achieved all that much. We only had 27 students. I had been hoping for a hundred."

"Nell, then tell them what you have done, and then tell them what you hope to do if you can get the support."

After lunch, following Chet's suggestion, Bob simply gave a recitation of what had transpired out in Colorado. When he was finished giving what amounted to an annual report, Bob was greeted with stony silence. Finally, Bill Grede stood up, and asked for the floor.

"For the first time in years," he began, "I feel ashamed. The rest of us here are in favor of free enterprise because we are businessmen and we know how vital it is to us. But who are these people out there in Colorado? I never heard of any of them.

"We have an editor of a small newspaper, a secretary, a bookkeeper and a physical therapist doing their best to promote freedom as they understand it." He paused and looked over at Bob. "And your good wife, too, Bob." He turned again to the gathering.

"These people, without a penny to their names, went out, got jobs and contributed their own earnings to make free enterprise a reality to any and all corners. When has any of us done anything to equal that? Our interest in free enterprise is self-serving. The interest of these people is above that. Wouldn't you agree with that, Bob?"

Bob hadn't expected to be brought into the discussion. Finally he stammered, "Not altogether. It's our country, too."

"I don't know about the rest of you," Bill went on, "but I'll tell you what I'm going to do."

He abruptly reached into a pocket and pulled out his check book. "I'm writing a check for \$1000

right now.”

Mr. Bradley was not to be outdone. “I’ll give you one for \$5000.” Others began fumbling for their respective wallets. Before the meeting broke up, Bob had \$11,000, with more promised. Bob was profuse with his thanks and Chet was jubilant that the meeting had gone so well.

That meeting provided the financial wherewithal for the second year of Freedom School. Work began on the needed cabins. Norris showed up with his younger brother, Link, who wanted to become active at the school. Link was a man of the mountains, independent, quiet, with a far-away look in his blue eyes. He wasn’t a man that had been educated in schools, but he knew everything there was to know about the outdoors, and had a steady, unwavering devotion to truth. Bob took him on officially as horse “wrangler” and construction and maintenance foreman.

In the midst of the endeavors to begin the second year of Freedom School, Bob’s attorney from San Francisco, Aaron Sargent, called him. His libel suit against Retail Credit Corporation was finally going to be heard in federal court during April, 1958. Bob, Loy, and Ruth headed for San Francisco where the trial would take place.

Sargent’s strategy was to show that Retail Credit had conjured up Bob’s involvement with Mankind United for the purpose of discrediting his reputation. He would prove that it was false, and deliberate and hence that Bob had been libeled.

In court, Bob agonized as he was made to relive his life with the “I Am.” Despite his misgivings about having accepted some obvious nonsense, there were parts of what he had learned from the Ballards which had stood the test of time. He could see for himself that each person was a sovereign individual, answerable only to his or her God-like “Presence.” The Ballards’ motivation had always been above suspicion. And he had had those inexplicable “religious experiences,” which he had never really been able to understand.

The second day of the trial dealt with Bob’s role in Mankind United. Bob, of course, denied ever having joined such an organization, much less having written some of its major works. The defense attorneys were embarrassed when they were unable to provide any evidence to substantiate their client’s claim.

When the jury received their instructions from the judge, they were told that Bob had legitimate grounds for claiming damages, as the report appeared to have been fabricated. However, the judge directed the jury to bring in a verdict of “not guilty” for Retail Credit. The suit had not been brought within the time designated by the statute of limitations.

Although Bob had technically lost the case, he was still vindicated. Retail Credit publicly acknowledged that it had issued a false and libelous report. His job was now secure with Harry Hoiles at the *Gazette Telegraph*. Harry now knew that Bob had told him the truth. In Bob’s own mind, the case had been a gigantic waste of time. He had no wish to appeal the decision or prolong the suit in any way. It had only served to interrupt his work at the newspaper and Freedom School.

In order to increase Freedom School’s national visibility, Bob formed a National Board of Fellows in late 1957, to help publicize the Freedom School efforts. This board was made up of people of some prominence, who were willing to let him use their names as points of reference. They actually had no responsibility for or connection with the school’s efforts. The board included the author Taylor Caldwell, the actress Corrine Griffith (who was a close friend of Frank Chodorov’s), the conservative columnist George Peck, and Harry Hoiles, Frank Chodorov and about two dozen more local and national businessmen and professional people, who were primarily conservative in their outlook.

There was one problem that plagued Bob with respect to these conservatives. From the very start, his work at the newspaper had been to develop and present a consistent philosophy with respect to freedom. The effort of teaching day in and day out through the summer had been a real challenge. Not only did he find out how little he really knew, but Bob was placed in a situation where he was constantly explaining and defending his position. He had come to the realization that there were some parts of the conservative position which were anything but consistent. Bob had become acquainted with all these people who were now helping to boost his efforts because they knew him as a conservative. But he also

knew that if they listened to him carefully, some of them would find his consistent position incompatible with their own.

Bob was opposed to the idea of socialism and communism, but the conservatives on his National Board of Fellows were lined up against Russia and her satellites. They promoted socialism and communism so long as it was American. Bob realized that if one objectively examined the positions of the Russian communists and the American conservatives, one would find an astonishing similarity and a certain agreement on basic, underlying principles.

The one thing common to all conservatives and their socialist and communist opponents was that they all endorsed the principle of government taxation. They merely debated over how much was to be collected, from whom, and how it was to be distributed. It seemed to Bob that the private property principle and taxation were diametrically opposed; yet conservatives endorsed both principles at the same time. How could private property be sacred if the government had the power to tax a person's income irrespective of how much or how little that person cared to contribute or spend towards its upkeep? Wasn't it inconsistent to defend private property while at the same time endorsing government confiscation by calling it taxation?

Bob had obtained the nominal support of conservatives because of his stand in favor of private property and his opposition to communism and socialism. He justified his use of conservative names on the grounds that they were in agreement on "most" issues. However he realized that there was a fundamental chasm between his thinking and that of the conservatives. These ideas had appeared in his editorials and made him an increasingly controversial figure within conservative ranks. Bob could never endorse any form of taxation because no matter how it was disguised it always necessitated some amount of coercion. Meanwhile, Bob hoped that he might reach some of the more thoughtful and open-minded conservatives in his classes so he might assist them in uncovering their inconsistencies.

Preparing for the 1958 school year continued to be the top priority, once things had settled down after the trial. Since Bob was fearful that his Board of Fellows might not endorse the school's freedom philosophy, he decided to form a new one, distinguished from the first, by being called "The Board of Graduate Fellows." Only those who had completed Bob's comprehensive course and could, in sincerity, give moral support to the school's efforts would be asked to serve. As soon as a sufficient number of people had been appointed to the new Board, the old group would be disbanded. Among those on the new Board were: Ward Fleming, Sartrell Prentice, Jr., Robert M. Gaylord, Jr., and George Resch.

The summer of 1958 was as successful as the first. A total of 50 students graduated that summer and many of the same instructors returned to help Bob, including Leonard Read. The newcomer was Rose Wilder Lane, who in particular, made a real hit with the students. She was shy and very reserved. When Bob introduced her to her first group of students, she insisted that she couldn't give a speech or even talk to an informal group in public. Bob pleaded with her to tell the "story" of her experiences and managed to at least get her started talking. He was called away from the class on an errand and when he returned two hours later, the entire group of students was seated on the floor in front of her, listening with attention they never gave anyone else. Rose Wilder Lane had them spellbound, relating her flirtations with communism in the early 1920's, her travels in Europe, and her eventual advocacy of the freedom philosophy.

The family had met with more success than they had ever imagined possible. Only one problem clouded the horizon. The annual payment on the deed of trust would come due near the end of September, 1958. There just wasn't enough money left over, after operating expenses had been met, to meet the payment due on the property.

One day at the end of the summer, Gene Hausske and Bob sat together on the small porch just outside the door to the classroom. Bob had already told Gene of the serious financial problem facing the school. Bob had tried to obtain the money through every honorable means. There just hadn't been enough students and the funds from everyone's combined incomes and the fund drives were insufficient.

Rose Wilder Lane happened to come out of the classroom at this moment. She liked Freedom School because it exemplified "real Hard Core devotion," as she described *it*. She saw Freedom School

as a grass-roots movement, “little, and poor, and squeezing every penny’s worth of value out of every dollar. As well as every minute’s worth out of every hour.”

“What’s wrong?” she demanded. “You look as if you’re waiting to be hanged.”

“Well, we need about another \$1500 to meet our annual payment on the land or we may have to shut the place down.”

“Is that all?” she asked. She re-entered the classroom. In a minute Rose returned, waving a check in her hand. The ink wasn’t dry yet. “Here’s your money. It’s nothing. Don’t you dare talk to me of closing this place!”

Bob knew Rose was not a wealthy woman, although she was a well-known author and journalist. She refused to use her talents to earn money on which she had to pay Social Security taxes. Bob was overwhelmed, and deeply grateful.

The second school year had consisted of eight two-week sessions. Thunderbird Lodge, the first of the residence cabins had been completed the prior winter.

By the third year, thanks to continuing fund-raising drives, money was available for more construction. Work on Reno Sales Lodge, a two-story, combination classroom and dormitory, was begun. The basic format for each session was fairly well established. Bob and Loy would arise around 4:30 a.m. Loy would fix breakfast for the staff, after which Ruth and Bob would drive off to the paper. Edy and Marji would both leave a little later for their jobs. About eleven, Bob would leave the paper and return to school in time for lunch with all the students. Ruth would return home at the end of the day with Edy or Marji.

Students had the morning free. After breakfast they could sleep, read, write their papers (one was due each evening), or carry on private discussion. Recreational activities like horseback riding, pitching horse shoes, jogging, hiking, fishing, archery, and badminton were available. Lunch was served at noon and everyone was expected to be on hand. Classes commenced at one and ran until five with a short break half-way through the afternoon. Dinner was at six. Classes began again at seven, and ran until nine. There were classes for 12 consecutive days, so the comprehensive course consisted of 72 hours of concentrated study.

Because of the stringent classroom demands, countervailing efforts were made to provide an air of informality and relaxation outside of class. Loy produced an attractive variety of meals. On Sunday morning, breakfast was served outside on a picnic area near the creek. Every second Thursday evening, Loy would provide entertainment from her repertoire of songs. Graduation exercises and picture taking would take place on the final Friday evening.

When the third school year ended in September, 1959, it seemed to Bob that he was at last ready to make the move that had spurred this project from the very beginning. Bob and the family had built Freedom School from scratch. It was now time to turn it over to a professional. Badly Harper was still the man Bob had in mind.

Bob had revealed his intention to Chet Anderson in Milwaukee. Chet believed that Harper would insist on the formation of a group of Trustees, made up of substantial citizens whose names were known and respected throughout the country. He thought that Harper would think it necessary that the school have backing from persons with prestige and a bit of clout.

Chet’s idea was that the very finest person to head up a new Board of Trustees would be none other than Bill Grede of Grede Foundries, who had gone out of his way to help Bob at that luncheon meeting in Milwaukee. Grede and another well-known banking executive, Robert W. Baird, Jr., from Milwaukee agreed to serve on Bob’s new Board. In addition, James Doenges, the surgeon, Ned Kimball, an attorney from Waterville, Washington, and R. W. Holmes of the Boeing Company all became directors. These men met at the school in late September, 1959, and agreed with Bob’s proposition that he turn the academic area of the school over to Baldy. Everyone knew him, or knew of him, and the choice was applauded. Here was a man with consistency of belief, the ability to teach, and the necessary credentials. Baldy was invited to attend the meeting of the Board of Trustees.

While waiting for Baldy to fly in to Colorado Springs, another motion was put before the new

Board. Should Freedom School seek tax exemption, or should it simply remain a non-profit corporation? Seeking tax exemption presented several problems. First of all, the operations of the school would come under a certain amount of governmental scrutiny. It would be banned from any kind of political activity and there would be government forms to fill out regularly. But on the other hand, some large contributions had been promised if Freedom School ever achieved a tax exempt status. Bill Grede finally made the recommendation that the school file for tax exemption. He believed it might be difficult to attain, particularly when the Internal Revenue discovered that the school was preaching free enterprise. (After much time and many appeals, the exemption was granted by the Internal Revenue Service in 1960. Application was also made to the State of Colorado and to Douglas County for exemption from property and local taxes on the ground that they were a school. This approval came through without any trouble.)

When Baldy arrived, Bob described the activities at Freedom School. He was doing the teaching, but had never held himself to be a teacher. Bob's forte was organization and fund-raising to keep a school going. Although it had taken longer than anyone anticipated, the school was now in existence; its financial position was satisfactory. Its small debt was being serviced. A building program had been undertaken and the facilities, though limited, could be expanded.

Bob asked Baldy if he would be interested in taking over the academic responsibilities of the school? If so, the Board of Trustees was willing to appoint him to that position.

The look on Baldy's face as Bob made this proposal was not the one Bob had anticipated. Baldy seemed to be experiencing a form of panic. Bob's proposition was apparently both unexpected and unwanted. Bob realized that Baldy had left FEE, but was unaware that Baldy was in the very initial stages of beginning the Institute for Humane Studies.

Baldy was almost speechless. He was obviously surprised, and almost thunderstruck. Finally he said he would have to think it over and would telephone his decision. The following day he did so and said he would provide a letter in which he would show why he was rejecting the offer.

Baldy's rejection put Bob on the spot. It meant he would have to continue teaching, whether he thought himself capable or not. He would also have to be chief executive officer, chief fundraiser, and the "man about town" for Freedom School.

Baldy did send a letter to all the Trustees, explaining why he turned down their offer. Jim Doenges was the only Trustee who ever shared his letter from Baldy with Bob. Baldy's basic objections were much the same ones that he had had back in New York before Bob put the school together. This wasn't the time. Colorado wasn't the right location. There was still not enough money. Baldy also cast grave doubts upon Bob, personally. What was Bob doing there in Colorado - out in the woods - with all those unmarried women on his staff? What about his earlier connection with the "I Am?" Could Baldy rely on Bob's promise that he wouldn't interfere with how Baldy ran the school? Wouldn't Baldy be lowering his own standards by associating with Bob, who had no academic credentials, and his school, which was not accredited? What assurance would Baldy have that his own reputation and integrity would not become tarnished by becoming part of Freedom School?

Baldy never wrote or talked to Bob directly about the matter. Baldy's silence wounded Bob in a way that never completely healed.

“Aggression is ALWAYS wrong. There can be no justification for it under any circumstances. ... Our problem is to control ourselves. ... We must begin to concern ourselves with the moral recognition that we must not join the ranks of the aggressors, even for what may appear to be cause.” June 26, 1961

Chapter 18 – Freedom School —The Middle Years

Ralph Williams walked into Bob’s office at the *Gazette Telegraph* one morning during 1959. He was in his late seventies, and he wore a felt hat and a large gray overcoat. He held himself as erect as a trooper on parade. He introduced himself, telling Bob that he had read his editorials and liked them.

Then without any hesitation, Ralph looked at Bob and said, “I have decided that I can trust you. I would like to arrange an appointment with you. I have a serious proposition to make. The appointment must be for a meeting at my home. There, if you and I come to an agreement, I believe you will find that what I have to offer will be of great value to you.”

They set an hour later in the week for the appointment. As Bob parked his car, he saw that the Williams’ house was a white bungalow placed on a relatively narrow lot. The front lawn was in poor shape, full of weeds, and in need of mowing.

Bob knocked on the front door, and after a brief interval Ralph Williams ushered him through the doorway. He was dressed in a black suit and wore a white shirt and bow tie. He looked at Bob without smiling, pulled a watch from his vest pocket, nodded, and said, “You’re on time. That’s good. Come in.”

Ralph closed the door behind Bob and yet they were still outside. Though under the roof, in front of them was a second, smaller house with another front door. Ralph, in fact, lived in a house within a house. It was a cottage, less than half the size of the bungalow in which it was situated. The portion of the bungalow into which Bob had come from the street was still unfinished. In all his life, Bob had never seen anything like this and it was obvious that even his quick scrutiny was embarrassing his host. Ralph took Bob through the second front door saying, “I never got around to finishing it.”

Bob found himself in a tiny parlor, furnished in the style of the early 1900’s. The place was lined with make-shift shelves, which were filled with books. There was some old disheveled furniture, a couple of lamps, and a cheap upright piano. In the place of honor beside the door was a magnificent bronze statue about four feet tall. It was a celebrated masterpiece by August Moreau entitled “Psyche and Eros.”

“It’s the original,” Ralph said. “There are no copies. It belongs in a museum. Sorry you can’t see the best one. I gave it to the Elks Club. It used to stand over there,” he said, pointing to an empty pedestal. “Please have a chair.

“I don’t have many callers, so I don’t use this room often. Later on you’ll have an opportunity to examine the books. Many of them I collected when I was literary critic for the *New York Times*. Most of them are first editions and a few are numbered editions signed by the author.”

There was an inexpensive carpet on the floor and battered green shades at the windows. Some of the things in the room were valuable antiques. Some were just plain junk.

“This room is amazing,” Bob finally said. “No one could imagine what’s in here. But why have you actually invited me out here? You didn’t just want me to see your treasures, did you?”

For the first time Ralph smiled. “No. Set your mind at rest on that score. I want to die and needed to talk to you about that.”

Bob squirmed in his chair. “Well, you’ve come to the wrong person if you want me to help you fulfill that ambition.”

“I know that. I’ve read what you have written. It’s a shame, of course. If we were truly civilized we would have death parlors. There, a person wanting to die, could go; arrange for a spectacular party, invite his friends, or hire a room full of girls with whom to make love. He could have the music of his choice; entertainers; whatever he wanted. And then, at the appropriate time, he could be quietly and

scientifically put to sleep.

“Instead, we have such prejudice against death that it has been made illegal. So, in the end, we must all break the law.

Bob was a bit taken aback. “I’d never agree to kill you, Ralph, even if you gave me everything in this house. I respect human life.”

“That is why I am turning to you. I am asking you to look after me in my twilight years. Hopefully, the time left will be brief.

“There won’t be too much to do. Grocery shopping once a week. Perhaps mow the lawn. Be my companion and sit with me for short visits now and again. Or maybe we can go out for a drive in your car.

“In exchange I will make you the sole beneficiary of my will. You will inherit the house and lot. In addition, I have a secret place where I hide my savings. They are not in a bank. Provided you prove yourself a friend, I will show you where it is kept.”

Bob thought of those eccentric millionaires he had read about.

“What you are asking me to do is within my ability to fulfill. You’ve created a sense of mystery and wonderment. I have no idea how much money you have or how much any of this is worth. But let me reveal myself, at least to a degree.

“I am trying to build and run a school dedicated to the principles I write about in my editorials. Your house and all that is in it must be worth at least several thousand dollars. If you will make your will to the Freedom School I will agree to act as your errand boy and companion. I don’t want your money for myself but I could certainly use the assets for the school.”

“No.” Ralph shook his head. “I don’t deal with institutions. I tried it with the Elks Club and it didn’t work. I’m sorry now that I gave them that statue. I will leave what I have to you personally, or you may forget the whole offer. What you do with my assets after you get them is your business. It’s either that, or I might as well just set a match to the whole place and go out in a blaze of glory.”

Bob thought about it for a moment. “Very well, Ralph, I’m your man. I’ll agree to look after you as best I can within my own schedule. But my own work at the paper and the school comes first. I’ll fit you in and do a good job.”

“Very well,” and they shook hands to seal the deal.

In the beginning of his association with Ralph, and while Ralph was still endowed with some vigor, Bob maintained weekly contact with him. If Ralph didn’t call him at the *Gazette Telegraph* office during the week, Bob would check with him on Saturday mornings to see what was needed on the shopping list.

Eventually Bob was entrusted with a key. After that, Bob would let himself in, put the groceries away, and then spend a half hour or so with Ralph as a visitor. Bob took him out for infrequent drives and one time they visited the cemetery where Ralph’s future grave and headstone were located. Another time Bob drove him out to the school to show him what was being done. Ralph appeared bored and anxious to return home.

When Ralph thought Bob was becoming disinterested in him, he would tease Bob with his treasures. One day he displayed his will, which true to his word had been rewritten to make Bob his sole beneficiary.

Another time, Ralph appeared to be eager to talk to Bob. He had decided to confide in him the location of his hidden savings. He directed Bob to one of the floorboards in an unfinished part of the bungalow. It wasn’t nailed down, but one end was tightly jammed under a plate supporting one of the wall studs. Bob retrieved the black metal box that was under the floor.

Using a key which hung from a dirty string on his neck, Ralph unlocked the box and handed it back to Bob.

“I want you to count it, Bob.”

The box contained three stacks of bills and a copy of his will. Bob counted the money and replaced it in the box.

“I earned every cent of it, or it has been part of my pension. It is honest money. I want you to promise me two things. First, I want you never to tell anyone how much there is here. And finally, I want you to promise me that you won’t report this to the I.R.S. I know you plan to give everything to the school, but this money is for you. All of it. I don’t want the I.R.S. to get their filthy hands on any of it. It’s taken me all my life to save that much. I won’t rest easy in the grave if you betray me.”

Bob was pensive for a moment. “Ralph, give me your word on just one point. Tell me that you obtained this money by honest means. Your word is good. If any of this has been stolen, I won’t promise.”

“You have my promise,” Ralph said with great solemnity.

After the first two years, Ralph’s health declined. He ate little and refused to see a doctor or go to a hospital. By this time, Bob felt the necessity of checking on Ralph every day. One Wednesday when Bob phoned, he got a busy signal. Bob thought this to be no more than Ralph’s forgetting to hang up the phone. When Bob finally did get around to visiting Ralph later that day, he found him flat on the floor.

Ralph was conscious but unable to move. Bob called for an ambulance and told Ralph he was sending him to the hospital. When Bob visited Ralph in the hospital he anticipated a figure of pathos. But instead Ralph’s eyes sparkled. Bob was apologetic. He knew Ralph hadn’t wanted to leave his home.

Ralph held out his bony hand. “Thank you, my good friend. These people at the hospital know nothing about me. I am the one who knows. I will be dead soon.”

Bob called on Ralph the following day, but he was asleep. And in the middle of the night of December 2, 1961, he received a call from the hospital. Ralph had gone, at last, on the great journey he had longed to take.

His assets were sold in the early part of 1962, and the proceeds turned over to the school. The books, mainly classical literature, Shakespeare’s works, and some philosophy, along with Bob’s own small collection, became the nucleus of the Freedom School Library, that eventually grew to 10,000 volumes. Ralph’s piano and a few antiques were removed to the school as well. That strange old man had not only befriended Bob but made a substantial donation to Freedom School. Bob remembered him with great fondness.

As the year 1959 progressed, there were a number of projects requiring immediate attention. The finishing touches had to be put on Reno Sales Lodge. The Annual Report for 1959 and the School Prospectus for 1960 had to be published. Bob needed to embark on a cross-country tour to raise more money, and then, once it had been raised, begin construction on another residence cabin.

With Baldy’s rejection came a twinge of conscience. Bob had repeatedly promised all four women that the time would come when they would be paid for their work at the school. Meanwhile, the outside income earned by Bob, Ruth, Edy, and Marji was one of the mainstays of the school. Loy paid her dues through her herculean efforts on campus.

In fact, without the years of work they had all put in, for which there had been no recompense save their survival, the school would not have existed. So Bob suggested to Edith that she put each of them on salary, but none of them would be paid. A bookkeeping entry would be used to accrue their wages. Then at such time as the school was on a solid financial basis, they would be able to begin drawing their back wages. The accrual of their salaries was to be made retroactive to the opening of the school in 1957.

Now that Bob realized he was going to be responsible for the entire academic effort at Freedom School, it occurred to him that he might write a book outlining the freedom philosophy as he had developed it in class and in his editorials. Even though he used such books as Henry Hazlitt’s *Economics in One Lesson*, Frederic Bastiat’s *The Law*, and Henry Grady Weaver’s *Mainspring of Human Progress*, in his classes, there was always at least some point in each of them where their authors fell back on government support. Bob wanted a book that was totally consistent.

One day while Bob was travelling on board a train, heading out on one of his fund-raising campaigns, he happened upon Jim Gipson of the Caxton Press in Caldwell, Idaho. He asked Jim if he

would be interested in such a book. The answer was in the affirmative. Since Bob had so little time, he wrote a series of editorials which step-by-step explained the doctrine of liberty. He had to write editorials anyway. These were published in the newspaper, gathered, and then sent off to Caxton Press after Rose Wilder Lane had written an introduction. The resulting book was titled *The Nature of Man and His Government*, and came off the press in late 1959.

Dick Schwerman, one of the students from the 1959 sessions, published Bob's second book. Dick owned a trucking company, and, after his experience at Freedom School, wanted to get involved in the marketing of ideas. He approached Bob about writing a book that incorporated many of his arguments from classroom teaching. Although Bob was under contract to Caxton to submit his next manuscript to them (giving them the right of first refusal) Schwerman was fairly certain that no established publishing firm would want to publish such "far-out" ideas.

With difficulty, Bob found time to write such a book. Bob wrote the volume beginning with his earlier position as a conservative, showing how his understanding of freedom had grown, and explaining his inescapable movement in the direction of a consistent libertarian position. He drew a decisive line between the philosophies of individualism and socialism, showing that the American revolution was based on the moral premises of individualism. When Caxton turned the manuscript down, Dick published it as *This Bread is Mine* in 1960.

It was also during this time that additional construction took place. Bob, Link, and Gene designed a three story log building, which would contain a small auditorium, projection booth, housing, and a large area for the library. This building was named after Rose Wilder Lane in honor of her never-to-be-forgotten rescue of the school at the end of its second year. Bob, Loy, and Tommy also moved into their new cabin, named Falcon Lair, after their sojourn in Beverly Hills. At Loy's suggestion, this new cabin took the shape of a hexagon and contained a central fireplace and student lounge. Connected to the hexagonal part of the cabin was another rectangular structure housing bedrooms, a garage, furnace room and Bob's small office.

As Freedom School progressed, it became clear that it was filling a unique function. It was the only school in the country, probably in the world, that was offering classes in which the principles of free market economics were being taught without compromise. The list of guest instructors, guest lecturers, and assistants who joined in this effort began to read like the "Who's Who" in support of American free enterprise. Some of them included Oscar Cooley, Ohio Northern University, Elgie Marcks, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, Ellis Lamborn, Utah State Agricultural College, Ruth Maynard, Lake Erie Women's College, Salvatore Saladino, Queens College, A. Neil McLeod, Institute of Paper Chemistry, and William A. Paton, University of Michigan. Admittedly, not all of these people held conclusions identical to those that Bob developed in his classes, but it is safe to say that all of them favored free and private enterprise and were appalled at the size and power of the government of the United States. All of them opposed the growth of taxes, some opposing taxes outright and some favoring a limited and regulated taxation.

Outside of Rose Wilder Lane, Bob's favorite guest at Freedom School was Frank Chodorov. Both had been guest instructors at least one week each year, since the second year of Freedom School. During the first four years of the school, by Bob's own admission, it was Frank who did the most for his own development as a teacher and a thinker. Bob had originally made Frank's acquaintance when he was in Florida, when Frank had published his piece on the Girl Scouts.

Frank had begun his own intellectual pilgrimage by becoming a follower of Henry George, who believed in abolishing all forms of taxation except that on land. He had published such books as *The Income Tax: Root of All Evil*, and *One is a Crowd*. Chodorov had been editor of the publication *Analysis*, an associate editor of *Human Events*, and had served as editor of The Foundation for Economic Education's *The Freeman* for eighteen months. By the time he became associated with Bob at the Freedom School, he had dropped many of his earlier Georgist views in favor of the more libertarian stance that all forms of taxation were theft and should therefore be abolished.

Frank was one of the few people who had emerged out of the conservative movement who

understood the difference between the power of ideas and the power of the State. "Communism is a belief, not a nation," he would say to his students at Freedom School. "It is a doctrine which urges the abandonment of private capitalism and seeks to transfer the tools of production and distribution into the hands of the State." Frank claimed that the Russian government was communist, but that the Russian people, en masse, were not.

One of Frank's most valued contributions to Freedom School was his political realism. He understood that the behavior of politicians is predictable. They must seek popularity in order to be elected. To be successful, a politician must pander to the masses, and that meant providing them with free goods and services. On one occasion in class, Frank pointed out that American politicians were rarely doctrinaire in whatever they did. "They are just political opportunists, flip-flopping in the direction of popularity and votes. They are totally innocent of any economic or moral principles."

Because of Frank's marvelous background, his ease of manner in the classroom, and his unwillingness to compromise, Bob invited him to come to the 1961 sessions, not for one or two classes, as he had done in the past, but for the entire summer. The year started out well. Frank's classes were superb, and Bob began to think that he might, with confidence, turn the entire teaching chore over to Frank.

But on the occasion of a graduation night in July, 1961, Frank suffered a stroke while delivering a speech. While he was at the podium, his face turned white, and though he continued to talk, nothing he said made sense. At first, Bob didn't realize what had happened, but he finally relieved Frank. Arrangements were made for Frank's sister to come from New York to take her ailing brother home. Never again was Frank's voice to rise in lecture or debate. He was bedridden for the balance of his life and America and the Freedom School lost a great fighter for freedom, when he died in 1966.

In 1962, after six years of building, the Freedom School facilities were still inadequate. A larger classroom was needed. More office space, more student housing, and a place for a real library, where the school's five thousand volumes could be housed were all top priorities. Teaching and fund-raising were still Bob's primary responsibilities. Bill Grede's name as a Trustee of Freedom School was able to open many closed doors for Bob. Thanks to his support, Bob garnered a number of four figure checks and an occasional check with five figures in it. Harry Hoiles was a loyal supporter, and gave the school a few thousand every year. Even Harry's father, R.C., decided to contribute, and came across with \$60,000 as a gift. That was a pivotal sum and helped enormously.

Some extraordinarily good and bad assistance was to come Bob's way during these years. J. Dohn Lewis, and his wife, Penny, from Salt Lake City, took the comprehensive course, and then sent in an application to work. Dohn was hired as an administrative assistant and demonstrated a marvelous ability in preparing fund drive material. Later Penny, who was talented in her own right, was hired as a secretarial assistant. Then a fellow recommended by Chet Anderson was hired as a fund-raiser. In six month's time, Jim Swartout raised \$1000 against his expenses of almost \$8000. He wasn't paying his way and had to be fired. Another young man appeared by the name of Grant Corby. He was convinced he could sell Freedom School and was tremendously excited by what was being done. In two years of effort Corby brought in zero contributions. Ultimately the responsibility for raising money came back to rest on Bob's shoulders.

With the passage of time, Bob's responsibilities started wearing him down. His hair was turning gray and this gave him a patriarchal look. He had just turned fifty and was beginning to feel his age. This was particularly so during the summer, when he spent over 700 hours in the classroom giving lectures. His vocal chords were beginning to weaken, and often felt strained at the end of a session. His back also would "kick out" from time to time, and he found it necessary to have Link build him a special podium from which to lecture. By hanging on to the podium he could ease the weight off of his back. Sometimes he would have to hobble around using two canes. Away from the classroom he dashed about endlessly, performing a thousand chores. He still spent his mornings at the *Gazette Telegraph*, and in March, 1960 was promoted to editor-in-chief.

The classroom was the one place where he could find ease, calm, and certainty. Working in front of a class became his greatest joy. When he stepped before his students he was happy. He could give them complete latitude in their expressions without feeling threatened by their views. What if they were right? At least Bob knew his own position was reasonable and valid. Even if his view were not the only possible one, at least he knew that he had a completely logical and consistent position.

Outside of class, Bob spoke as little as possible, except when raising money. All his energies were concentrated in his efforts to teach, to communicate, and to tell people the truth as he saw it. His friends called him “enthusiastic” and “dedicated.” His foes called him “crazy” and “fanatic.” Whichever it was, the school managed to grow and prosper.

During a special class for executives in 1961, a man named Josh Greene enrolled. He was an employee of the Deering-Milliken Company of South Carolina, one of the country’s largest textile firms. Josh was an eager student and apt pupil. He gained a great deal from the session and approached Bob when the two-week period ended.

“Bob,” he said, “Roger Milliken simply has to take this course.”

Bob nodded in agreement. He had remembered receiving a \$1000 contribution through the mail from Roger Milliken, yet he knew nothing about him. “Josh, that’s your job. You’re supposed to return to your company and convince your boss to come out here.”

One day Bob received a telephone call from South Carolina. “Bob,” Josh said after identifying himself. “I’ve been trying to get Mr. Milliken to take the time to go out to Colorado for one of your courses. I’ve finally gotten him to agree to attend if you can schedule a session in South Carolina.”

“Will Mr. Milliken attend the classes in person if I do?” Bob asked.

“Yes. He’s agreed to do that. However, he wants to know how much you’ll charge.”

“Let’s work it this way, Josh. Milliken will have to pay all my costs. Transportation, room, and board, and the cost of books. He’s to provide his own evaluation. After he’s taken the course he can pay me what he thinks it’s worth. If he decides it’s worthless, he owes me nothing. I’ll let him be the judge.”

Josh called back and informed Bob that Mr. Milliken had agreed to his terms and had arranged for the class to be held at a splendid old hotel in Asheville, North Carolina. The class was conducted, but to Bob’s great disappointment, Mr. Milliken failed to show. At its conclusion, the executives who attended held a meeting during which they produced a letter which everyone signed, urging Mr. Milliken to take the course.

After Bob returned to Colorado, Josh got him on the phone again to apologize for the absence of his boss. He had simply been too busy, at the time, to attend as promised. Bob responded that a promise was a promise.

A few days later, Josh called back again. This time, Mr. Milliken sent his personal apologies through Josh and admitted he was out of line in having broken his agreement. If Bob would return for another session, he would certainly attend. Furthermore, he wanted Bob to schedule not one, but two, back-to-back sessions in South Carolina. He would attend one of them.

Bob managed to convince Harry to allow him to take the additional time off. The two sessions were to be given at Yeaman’s Hall, an exclusive club in Charleston, South Carolina. When Bob took off from Stapleton Field in Denver it was snowing, and by the time his plane neared Chicago a blizzard was raging. The plane couldn’t land in Chicago and was re-routed to Pittsburgh, where Bob found much to his chagrin that the lack of connections would make him a day late getting to South Carolina.

In desperation, Bob chartered a small plane and pilot and arranged to be flown to Charleston. He had made a commitment. Perhaps it was his radio or acting background. The show must go on. Bob called Josh to inform him of his change in plans. The chartered flight made it. Bob was met by a Milliken employee at 2 in the morning at a deserted airport and driven to the guest house on the Milliken property where he spent the remainder of the night. The next day he was chauffeured to Yeaman’s Hall.

Bob was greatly disappointed when he found that Mr. Milliken was not present, but Mr. Milliken sent word that he would attend the second of the two back-to-back classes. When Bob finally got to meet Roger Milliken, he was pleasantly surprised. He was younger than Bob, and not at all dour-faced

as Bob had expected. Roger had also brought along his cousin, Minot, from their New York office. It was plain that the men who worked with Roger held him in very high esteem, and followed his lead in every detail.

In a room filled with brilliant men of high achievement, Roger stood out. That second week session for the Milliken Company proved to be one of the highlights of Bob's career as an instructor. Bob refused to pull any punches and got along famously with both Roger and Minot.

At one point in the class discussion, the subject of tariffs came up. Mr. Milliken was fairly well known for his position in favor of tariffs to protect the textile industry. Bob was asked what the libertarian position would be in respect to tariffs.

Bob stated unequivocally that tariffs were unwarranted, both economically and morally. He gave his reasons, one by one. He could see that the atmosphere in the room was growing tense. Free trade was an essential of the free market, Bob explained and said that every customer in the world should be free to buy the highest quality product he could find at the lowest price available, regardless of where he lived or where the product was produced. Government interference at any point tended to protect the least efficient and punish the customer.

Bob could almost hear the air being sucked out of the room, as the Milliken executives drew in their breaths and focused on Roger. Would he let Bob's remarks pass without challenge?

When Bob had completed his summation, Roger spoke up. He was in the front and had to turn to face the rest of the group. "LeFevre is right," he said. "If we can't make textiles on a competitive basis with the best that can be done in the world, then we're in the wrong business."

Bob's esteem for Milliken zoomed. Not only did his observation require a dedication to truth, but additionally demanded a large and generous point of view. When the week's session was over, Roger asked if Bob would fly back to the Spartanburg, South Carolina headquarters with him in the company plane. Bob was delighted to do so, especially after he found that Minot would be in their company.

Aboard the plane, Roger and Minot conducted a whispered conversation. Finally Minot came over to Bob and broached the subject of Bob's remuneration. "Would it be all right, Bob, if instead of giving you one check, we gave you two? We'd like to give you \$40,000 for your own personal use and another \$60,000 as a contribution to the school. Would that be satisfactory?"

Bob was overwhelmed. After thanking the Millikens, he asked just one thing. "Since I'm on salary at the newspaper, I am getting paid for my time anyway. Would you mind making both checks in favor of the school?"

"No. That can be arranged. Sure you don't want something for your own efforts?"

"I'm sure. Our building program takes a lot of money. I can sure use it to help pay the bills at the school."

"And don't forget to send us a bill covering your expenses. That was part of the deal, too."

Bob had forgotten about that. He was stunned.

Back in Colorado, armed with two checks of such gargantuan proportions, the staff viewed Bob with awe. With the money, the school paid off the balance owing on their 320 acres and finished paying for Rose Wilder Lane Hall.

As a result of his contact with the Milliken organization Bob began giving his Freedom School sessions as part of their Management Orientation Program. Every year, Milliken's new executive recruits were funneled through a nine week introduction to textiles and management techniques. Roger made an arrangement with Bob to conduct special one week executive sessions for these new employees. Bob continued giving these sessions until late 1979.

“We are convinced that the term unlimited government is a redundancy. It is enough to say government. In point of fact, all governments are unlimited. They have to be. For them to be otherwise is for them to stop being governments.” August 21, 1961

Chapter 19 – The Phrontistery to Rampart College

In 1962, Bill Grede attended one of Bob’s classes at Freedom School. He was so impressed that the following year, in April, he arranged for nine of his good friends to attend a special executive session. Bill paid all costs, including their transportation expenses. This group included a number of high level executives, some of whom eventually arranged for Bob to give seminars to their employees. In attendance were Charles R. Sligh, executive vice-president, National Association of Manufacturers, New York; M. M. Anderson, the executive, vice-president of Aluminum Company of America; W. L. McGrath, the chairman of the board of the Williamson Company of Cincinnati; John T. Brown, vice-president of the Falk Corp. of Milwaukee; Paul A. Belknap, president-treasurer of Charleston Rubber of Charleston, S.C.; Tom W. Wise, vice-president of the W. H. Brady Company of Milwaukee; V. R. Tate, executive vice-president of Perfex Corp., Milwaukee; and Robert D. Love, vice-president and general manager of the Love Box Company of Wichita, Kansas. Also in attendance was Robert Welch, who had founded the John Birch Society in late 1958. Bill Grede also sat in on the class.

LeFevre and Welch found that they shared common ground on many points. Welch and the Birch Society held that the communists were engaged in a conspiracy to undermine the American way of life by infiltrating the United States government. LeFevre argued that whether or not there was an actual conspiracy, the result would be the same. The American people were so ill-informed about the nature of government and economics that, unbeknownst to themselves, they were selling out to the politicians and communists.

After Welch had finished the course, he publicly endorsed participation in what he dubbed “free-enterprise” schools in his pamphlet titled “The Neutralizers.” However he cautioned his followers not to become “drop-outs.” The fact was, as Welch well knew, that LeFevre had come into contact with a large number of conservatives who were active in the John Birch Society. Some of these people had attended Freedom School. In one particular instance, one of the John Birch Society’s “hardest working Section Leaders” resigned from his post in the Society as a result of listening to and studying LeFevre’s freedom philosophy. In Welch’s eyes, LeFevre’s disavowal of electoral politics and his emphasis on education to change men’s minds had “neutralized” at least one of his strongest supporters.

LeFevre’s Freedom School classes were to have a similar effect on many conservatives involved in political action. In one case in 1964, Tom Gumbert, who had attended Freedom School, dropped out of the race for state senator in Nebraska. Freedom School had made him realize that modern American politics was essentially a self-serving mechanism. It had been manipulated by politicians and special interest groups since the beginning. Gumbert had also come to realize that elected political representatives couldn’t represent all of the people in their district. Even if he hadn’t resigned from the race and had been elected, basic honesty dictated that he could not claim to represent those who had voted for his opponent or who had not voted at all. By what right could he possibly hold a mandate from them?

During 1963 and 1964, two continual concerns of the Trustees of the Freedom School were that the school must be put on a “pay as you go basis,” and that it must attract others who could be trained to pick up the reins, if for any reason, Bob should falter. These issues also became the concern of potential donors. Freedom School, from all appearances, looked like a one man show put on by Robert LeFevre. Nor was Freedom School a degree-granting institution. They wondered if there was something that could be done to improve the public standing of Freedom School, and at the same time make it less dependent upon Bob?

The Phrontistery was an academic project drawn up during 1963, with assistance from Ronald Hamowy, a graduate student at the University of Chicago. The Greeks used the word to indicate “a place

for learning and thinking.” It was a degree-granting program designed to run from November, 1963 through April, 1964. Despite the harsh Colorado winters, it was hoped that the school year could be lengthened without ill-effects. V. Orval Watts, one of Bob’s earliest economic teachers, was hired as Dean and Robert J. Smith, from California, who had been an outstanding Freedom School graduate, was hired as Watts’ assistant.

The Phrontistery program was designed to run with very little assistance from Bob. Eleven outstanding professors — Oscar Cooley, Arthur Ekirch, Milton Friedman, F. A. (Baldy) Harper, Bruno Leoni, James Martin, Ludwig von Mises, G. Warren Nutter, Sylvester Petro, Gordon Tullock, and Roger Williams — were brought in for two weeks at a time. Thirteen students, two of whom came from Argentina, completed the program. Each student prepared one lengthy paper and three of the students, Peter C. Blake, Dale M. Haywood and Eduardo Helguera, received their master’s degrees for work completed that winter. The degrees were accepted by the academic community. Helguera became an economist in Buenos Aires, and Haywood a professor at a private college. Blake went into journalism.

Sometime after the successful conclusion of the Phrontistery program, Bob flew to Los Angeles on a fund-raising trip. In particular, he hoped to ask R.C. Hoiles for another donation to the school. He had been very generous on earlier occasions, and Bob hoped that he would contribute again.

On at least one prior trip, Bob had stayed as a house guest with R.C., and he had made arrangements to do so again. Mrs. Hoiles was disabled and confined to a wheelchair. R.C. himself was in his 80’s but still active. He continued to dominate the Freedom Newspaper chain which he had forged.

R.C. was essentially a self-made man. He and his brother first became involved in newspapers by working in a print shop in their younger days. By the exercise of thrift and good judgment, R.C. eventually became owner of the print shop, swapped the shop for a part interest in a newspaper, and then eventually took control of the newspaper. This sort of entrepreneurial process had gone on during his entire life, so that by the 1960’s he owned 14 newspapers with a combined circulation of about 300,000.

For many years he wrote a daily column called “Better Jobs” in which he offered his own views about human freedom and government, and the views of numerous authors with whom he was sometimes in whole or partial agreement. He was a voracious reader, and took the position that the Declaration of Independence and the Decalogue provided all the laws men needed to live together in a civilized fashion. R.C. often described himself as a “voluntaryist” because he didn’t want to force anyone to deal with him (for example, buying his paper) against his will. He either dealt with them voluntarily or not at all.

He was a controversial and argumentative figure. Few people dared “cross swords” with him, for R.C. was totally fearless when it came to expressing his opinion. Once he had been ticketed for mishandling his car. When he went to court he refused to take off his hat or to stand when the magistrate entered. He observed that the only way he would take off his hat or stand up was if God appeared; otherwise he had no intention of doing so. He didn’t believe that any man should show reverence to another man simply because one of them was in the employ of the government.

Bob knew that as a rule the Hoiles contributed very little to nonprofit endeavors. The simple philosophy that R.C. and his three children, Clarence, Harry, and Jane (Hoiles) Hardy, held was that if a good or service were desirable and the public wanted it, then those who desired it and stood to benefit from it should be the ones to pay for it. If some good or service were offered which didn’t find enough support in the market place, then that offering should be withdrawn or the business selling it should be permitted to fail.

Bob often tried to explain to them that when one was trying to sell ideas, this rule of the market sometimes had to be modified. In the case of Freedom School, at least, those who could benefit were sometimes unaware of the benefit, and if they were young, often lacked the ability to pay for it. The Hoiles family agreed with Bob, at least to the extent of acknowledging that the market place for ideas had been ruined by government involvement through the tax-supported school system. These “gun-run” schools had eliminated the connection between payment and benefit. The idea that a student or his

parents should pay for education had been totally destroyed by a century of public education.

One of the areas where Bob and R.C. disagreed was on the question of capital punishment. In fact, it had been publicly acknowledged on the editorial page of the *Gazette Telegraph* that "the editors of Freedom Newspapers have not been able to agree on the morality of capital punishment."

But to the best of Bob's knowledge they were in substantial agreement in all other areas.

Harry had at one time shared R.C.'s position that since a man has a right to defend himself, that right might be assigned to the State. R.C. argued that capital punishment (by the State) was justified as a defensive measure. Bob countered that the murder of a person who had committed a murder was not a defensive measure at all (regardless of, who performed it), but rather an act of revenge. But regardless of whether or not the killing of a murderer was a defensive act, Bob could never understand how the State might be justified in acting on behalf of an individual. It had taken Bob two years to convince Harry that the arguments for capital punishment and the doctrine of human liberty were at odds.

Bob arrived on a Saturday night and planned to spend part of the day on Sunday, with R.C. After breakfast, he followed R.C. toward his study, where they often had their conversations. R.C. said, "Bob, we're having trouble with the toilet in one of those upstairs bathrooms. Do you know anything about them?"

"Not much," Bob conceded. "But I've learned a few things. Would you like me to take a look?"

R.C. nodded and Bob went upstairs. A minor adjustment was all that was required and Bob returned to the study.

R.C. looked up from the papers on his desk and glared at Bob. "I'll bet you never held onto a steady job in your life," he said. "I think you're a bum. You're no good, LeFevre. If I had my way, I'd fire you."

"Why, what do you mean?" R.C. was just not talking sense.

R.C. launched into a tirade of bitter acrimony. It was hard for Bob to believe. He finally said, "Is this some quaint way of thanking me for fixing your plumbing?"

R.C. redoubled his attack, calling Bob every name in the book. He also repeated his earlier statement that "If I had my way, I'd fire you," adding, "But Harry won't hear of it."

"Call him up, then."

A telephone was at hand, so Bob dialed Harry back in Colorado Springs. "Your father wants to fire me."

"Were you having a debate with him?" he asked.

"No. He just attacked me out of the clear blue."

"Let me talk to him."

Bob handed R.C. the phone and listened as he raved to Harry. Finally R.C. turned the instrument back to Bob. "Harry wants to talk with you."

"I'm sorry Dad feels the way he does. But I'm not going to fire you. Your job is here as long as you want it."

"I really appreciate that, Harry. I don't know what was the cause of all this."

"Forget it," Harry advised. "We'll talk about it some more when you get back."

Bob hung up and turned to R.C.

"It's clear to me that I am an unwanted guest. I'm sorry my presence here has so upset you. I'll get out right away. My friends will be here around eleven this morning."

Bob sought out Mrs. Hoiles, who had returned to her bed. "Thank you for all your many kindnesses," Bob said to her. "It's doubtful that I'll ever see you again. R.C. has taken a violent dislike to me and really cussed me out."

"I know," she nodded and smiled brightly. "He gets like that sometimes. Please don't hold it against him. There's nothing I can do with him when he gets that way."

Bob shook his head. "I won't hold it against him. But it's clear he wants nothing to do with me. So this is it."

Bob went to the dining room and sat down to wait for his friends. That was the last time he was

ever inside the Hoiles' home in Santa Ana.

As Bob flew back to Colorado Springs, he saw his position with the paper in a new light. Harry had reassured him about his job, and Harry was a man of his word. It was clear he could continue to keep working if he wished.

However, it seemed to Bob that he must have done something that R.C. could not forgive. It wasn't that the two of them differed with respect to capital punishment. It had to be that Bob had managed to convert Harry to his position. Bob had interposed himself between a father and his dearly loved son.

R.C. was a genius in two fields. First, he was a shrewd businessman, and second, he was an uncompromising champion of human liberty. R.C.'s elder son, Clarence, was also a good businessman, but he was not particularly attracted to the freedom philosophy. Harry, on the other hand, was closer to his father on both counts. He knew business, but he was also an idealist. Jane, the youngest of the Hoiles children, was, along with her husband, Robert Hardy, publisher of the Marysville, California *Appeal-Democrat*. Though she was seldom mentioned by her father or brothers, she was as perceptive and competent as they were.

Bob had never been close to Clarence or Jane, so his influence with them was negligible. But Bob and Harry over a period of almost ten years, had debated virtually every shade and nuance of freedom, each of them gaining points and losing points, until they virtually stood together. That was R.C.'s problem. Bob had exercised altogether far too much influence over Harry Hoiles. R.C.'s resentment of Bob's close affinity with Harry had probably smoldered beneath the surface for some time. It was not until that fateful Sunday morning, when the dam of emotion gave way, that Bob became aware of the situation.

As Bob thought about his circumstances, he realized he would be doing Harry and the newspaper a great disservice if he continued as Harry's editor. Bob would be literally driving a wedge between father and son. Harry would never go back on his word. Nor would R.C. ever change his opinion about Bob. Back at the *Gazette Telegraph*, Bob gave a month's notice. He would leave the job on January 15, 1965. Harry asked him to reconsider, but his mind was made up.

“If you really believe in freedom, you would have to believe that freedom is a necessary good, not only for you but for every other human being. And freedom is enhanced, not so much as you insist on it for yourself but as you recommend it for others. The same pattern relates to theft. Being opposed to theft does not merely mean that you do not want others to steal; it means that you will see to it, regardless of opportunity, that you will not steal. Theft is not condemned so much by your punishment of the other thief but by your own unwillingness to steal.” May 2, 1962

Chapter 20 – The Flood and the Aftermath

In May, 1964, Bob received the first of many letters to the *Gazette Telegraph’s* “Open Parliament” (letters to the editor) section signed ‘Virginia DeCourcey.’ These letters were well written and usually presented a logical discussion on some topic of current interest. Many of them were selected for publication.

Bob’s curiosity was aroused. Finally in late November, after he had published a rebuttal to one of her letters, he received a call from the letter writer. Her voice was fragile, and Bob pictured an old woman, or possibly someone of middle age with weak vocal chords. Virginia wanted to make an appointment with him so they could discuss the rebuttal face-to-face.

When the designated time came for the appointment, much to Bob’s amazement he found himself confronted by a diminutive school girl, fourteen years old. She was a sophomore in high school, had long, dark hair, large brown eyes, and a look of eagerness. She really and truly was interested in ideas and had come to meet Bob to talk about them.

Bob recovered from his surprise and went back over the subject of their discussion, showing why he felt that her position, while logically reasoned, derived from what he judged to be a faulty premise. Virginia listened with interest.

When Bob finished, she said, “You are right. How stupid of me to make that error. Thank you for correcting me.”

In Bob’s experience, people who would admit to having made a mistake were rare. People who were willing to thank you for having pointed out their mistakes were even more rare. To have a fourteen year old do those things was almost unheard of. There was something about Virginia, both intellectually and personality-wise, that captivated Bob.

Bob inquired about her family background. She said that her father was dead. She had an older sister who was married and two brothers, one of whom was often in trouble with the police. She lived with her mother and grandmother who were on welfare, at least part of the time. She was candid and appeared to be without guile. She had ridden her bicycle from the center of town to his office.

During 1965, Bob and Virginia became good friends. Virginia reached Bob’s heart and touched him in a way no one had in a long time. Bob loved Virginia as he would have loved a daughter. And Virginia returned the affection. She was an inquisitive person and Bob took great pleasure in answering all of her many questions. He began calling her “Gigi” and she would call him “Papa.” Sometimes she referred to him as “The Ogre.”

One of Virginia’s greatest desires was to enroll in a Freedom School course. However, the school’s policy was to admit no one under the age of sixteen. So Virginia was held at bay for two years. She finally did enroll for a course in 1966, and easily won a scholarship. She did well during the course because she had few peers when it came to the comprehension of ideas, concepts, and abstractions. She held Bob in very high esteem, even before she met him. In a letter to “Open Parliament” in October, 1964, she wrote of Bob as a teacher and a man of principle:

It has been said that if one would have done just one thing differently in their life, their entire future could be altered. That’s very true. At least for me.

If one spring night I had not picked up your newspaper, and had not happened to glance

through its pages and had not seen your editorial section, I might not have ever entered this wonderful world of education, learning and principle. I am only on the threshold of this world now. I have so much to learn. I feel I shall never learn enough. But that's the greatest gift man was given, the gift of being able to learn....

You have educated me. Let, it be said, then, you are the first man of principle I have ever encountered.

The year following Bob's introduction to Virginia, in many ways, was a pivotal one for both Bob and the school. At the Trustees' meeting during the winter of 1964, Freedom School had been officially renamed Rampart College (after the Rampart Range of mountains, where the school was located). In addition, Bill Froh had been chosen president and Bob was named dean, in charge of instruction. As of October, 1964, over 730 students had completed courses at Freedom School since its inception.

Since Bob was to leave the employ of the *Gazette Telegraph*, he hoped to devote all his time to the new Rampart College. Perhaps he and his new assistants would be able to attract additional students and really develop the ideas he held for the college. One of their main goals was to inaugurate a scholarly publication, called *Rampart Journal*, which would appear four times a year. Ruth Dazey was to be editor. With Bob's help, the two of them made *Rampart Journal* one of the most important outlets for individualist thought during the four years of its publication (Spring 1965 - Winter 1968). They republished, often for the first time in the 20th Century, such important 19th Century individualist works as Lysander Spooner's *No Treason: The Constitution of No Authority*, and his "A Letter to Thomas F. Bayard," P. E. de Puydt's "Panarchy," Herbert Spencer's chapter from *Social Statics*, "The Right to Ignore the State," and several of Auberon Herbert's pieces, such as "Mr. Spencer and the Great Machine," and "The Plea for Voluntaryism." It also published new works, destined to become classics, including Murray Rothbard's "Anatomy of the State," Roy Childs' "The Contradiction in Objectivism," and an entire issue prepared by Harry Elmer Barnes and James J. Martin devoted to revisionist history and the myths of the Cold War, and numerous other articles by Martin.

The immediate goal of Rampart College was to implement a graduate school, using the forum started by the Phrontistery session. Bob planned to hire several full time professors and envisioned the construction of several new buildings, including a large classroom building and large library building. The graduate school would offer advanced instruction in history, economics, and business management. His goals by this time had gone considerably beyond the simple program envisioned in the original Freedom School.

The 1965 school year began with a Milliken session in April, 1965. Registration held steady and classes continued right through June. On the 13th of that month, a class of twelve, eight women and four men, signed on.

After lunch on Wednesday, June 16, Bob had his scheduled class. As he headed for Rose Wilder Lane Hall, rain started falling. There was an ominous feeling from the darkening sky. As Bob involved himself in his lecturing, he dismissed all thoughts of rain. None of the buildings leaked and all were solidly built. Since there were not any windows or skylights in the lecture hall, Bob had no way of knowing what was happening outside.

Just as the three o'clock break arrived, Don Lewis, clad in bright yellow rain gear, entered at the balcony level. He leaned over the railing, dripping water on the desks below, "Bob, we need your help. Mud and water are coming into Reno Sales Lodge through the loading door. We're going to have to move our supplies or risk losing them"

"Sure thing," Bob replied. Leaving his notebooks on the podium he ran up the stairs to the balcony and joined Don.

Bob opened the door to go outside. It was only then that he realized the magnitude of the storm. The rain was coming down in torrents. The road which slanted down past the huge side porch of the Lodge was a river. The normal ruts had disappeared, and in their places were gullies too deep to estimate. The entire road was in the process of being washed away.

Bob dashed through the rain, moving up the hill to Reno Sales Lodge. There he found Tommy, his son, Penny, Dohn's wife, and their small son, along with Mohammed, the Lewis' golden retriever.

"In there," Penny said pointing to the room at the north end of the building. Dohn and Bob hurried to the store room, where paper and classroom supplies and the publication inventory were kept.

Bill Froh and Ruth were there, doing their best to move heavy cartons away from the double door in the side wall. The doors, which opened to the inside of the building, were partly open and a mound of gravel at least a foot high had already accumulated on the hardwood floor. On the outside of the building were a set of screen doors, which opened outward. They were jammed tight, with an ever increasing amount of mud, gravel and water hammering against them, holding them shut.

Just then came the sound of a tremendous crack. It wasn't thunder. Bob straightened up and looked into the office through which they had just entered in time to see Penny, babe in arms, and Tom dash out the front door. Then, it was as if an explosion shook the building. The uphill wall, made of cinder block and reinforced steel, had given way to the force of the storm.

Roaring into the office came a landslide, filling the entire room with mud and granite. In a split second, it was five feet deep. Files and office machines were buried. If Tom or Penny had stayed in that room, they probably would have been killed. As it was, Bob, Bill, Ruth and Dohn were trapped in the smaller room.

Above the roar of the storm, Bob heard Tom's voice. "Don't worry, Father. I'll get you out."

Somehow in the drenching rain, Tom had climbed on top of the churning landslide engulfing the building. He managed to dislodge part of one of the outside screen doors, which made an opening just about large enough for those inside to crawl through.

Once everyone was outside the building, Bob's next concern was for the students he had left in Rose Wilder Lane Hall. If Reno Sales Lodge was washed away, Rose Wilder Lane would be next in line to be hit by the landslide.

Inside the Hall, a scene of confusion met Bob's eyes. Marti had already moved as many books as she could to higher shelves. She was advising the students to collect their things and move to Falcon Lair, which was on higher ground. Four to five inches of slimy, oily mud lay over the floor already and in some cases had moved up to the lower shelves. Mud and water were oozing through the cement chinking, the whole length of the building.

As the group crowded out into the rain, the havoc wrought by the storm was instantly visible. There was a river where the road had been, but everyone managed to cross over safely and enter Falconwood Lodge.

The dining room had three large picture windows. Everybody was rain-drenched and just stood there looking outside. They saw huge boulders rolling and bouncing down the hill, some six feet in diameter.

"Tom, do you think you can get over to Falcon Lair? We'll stay together here, till you get back. If it's all right, we'll move everybody up there."

Tommy soon returned and reported. "Falcon Lair's fine, Father. It's just raining and hailing over there. But there are some trees across the road. You'll have to climb over them."

"There goes my car," Bill Froh said. "It was parked in front of Reno Sales. It looked like the earth opened up and swallowed it." "Holy cow!"

Everybody moved towards the kitchen and went out the back door and into the storm. It had let up a little, but the rain was still falling steadily as they marched towards Falcon Lair.

Once there, Bob went out on the veranda accompanied by several of the others. From this observation post, they had a pretty good view of the meadow below. Little Plum Creek had literally burst its banks. The entire meadow was under water. Trees, slopes, and roads were gone. Naked cliffs of brown earth stood stark where ground cover and shrubs had been. The cars parked in the meadow were up to their doors in water. No horses were to be seen. Marji had purchased a battery powered radio two days before and was listening to the storm reports. Palmer Lake and Larkspur were both isolated. The Platte River flowing through Denver had overflowed. Property damage was in the millions of dollars.

The pantry was raided, and Ida, Loy's assistant cook, got a meal together. Everyone prepared to spend the night in Falcon Lair.

As Bob lay awake that night, he thought about his beautiful school. What he had labored for so hard and long was in shambles. The radio reported that Perry Park Road, their access to the town of Palmer Lake, had been washed out. Bridges were gone. Property damage was extensive from Colorado Springs, all the way into Denver. The federal government had declared the region a disaster area.

When Bob awoke the next morning, he found that the staff had already taken the initiative to get things rolling. Ida had refused to listen to his directives and had spent the night in her own bed with three inches of water under it. The propane line to the cook stove remained intact, so Ida managed to have a hot breakfast available for everyone.

After breakfast, Bob reassembled the students at Falcon Lair.

"The classroom and library at Rose Wilder Lane Hall are unusable. Perry Park Road is washed out in three places," he told them, and "the bridge at Butler Canyon is gone. Please try not to worry. We'll get you out of here at the earliest possible moment."

One of the students blurted, "Do we have to go?"

Bob was stunned. "Don't you want to go?"

There was a chorus of dissent. Davis Keeler, one of the students, said, "You've been talking about the nature of contracts and the sanctity of boundaries. If you don't conduct the course aren't you in violation of our contract?"

"I guess I'm in error," Bob said. "I thought you all would welcome the chance to get away. And you're correct. I was trying to renegotiate the contract without your consent. You'll be able to stay if you wish. Bathing facilities will be limited and you won't get all the comforts you are used to. But if you can stand it here, I sure can deliver the lectures."

There was no reluctance. Everyone wanted to stay.

Bob suddenly thought of his notebooks. He'd left them on the podium in Rose Wilder Lane Hall. "My notebooks, I'll have to have those; the blackboard won't be such a loss."

"I'll get them for you," Walt Ryan, another of the students, said. "No problem. And maybe we can help clean up the place, too. After all, we do have our mornings free."

Gene organized work brigades and everyone pitched in. Dave Keeler and Walt Ryan were two of the most helpful, but all the other students readily assisted. They included Kathleen Cochran, Jeanne A. Doran, Ellagwen Green, and her daughter, Linda, Ann Hillwick, Roy Johnson, Barbara Rankin, Betty Wiebe, Mark Ahern and Alfred J. Love, Jr. While the students were working, Bob went around the property to make a complete survey of the damage.

Reno Sales Lodge had received the most damage. It, and the grounds around it, were a sad looking sight. Bill Froh's car was still there, standing vertically, engine down, in a tremendous hole in the ground. The earth had simply washed out from underneath it. At the other end of the lodge, the storm had created another excavation some fourteen feet deep.

Dohn Lewis appeared with a look of satisfaction. "You're lucky, LeFevre," he said. "Here's Rampart College!"

"What do you mean?"

"Look at this damage as an opportunity," he suggested. "Boy, will you be able to raise the money now."

Bob was far from feeling such confidence. The entire office on the first floor of Reno Sales was ruined: typewriters, files, all the school's records, promotional lists, books, and supplies of every sort. Bob sought out Ruth. "Let's ready some telegrams. We'll notify the enrollees for the next class not to come. As soon as the telephones are back working, you can send them out."

"Let's not be in such a hurry, Bob. This is Thursday. We have more than a full week to get things straightened out. I don't think we'll have to cancel anything."

"Look at the destruction and all this mess!" Bob replied.

"No, look at the students," Ruth said. Six of them were in the classroom, using plywood scoops

and shovels to scrape mud and water out of the room. Ruth flashed a smile. "Aren't they wonderful?"

Bob had been feeling sorry for himself. "If they can pitch in like that, we can whip this thing."

Next, Bob sought out Gene. "As soon as feasible," Bob told him, "get to town and hire extra help. We've got to shovel all the gravel out of Reno Sales. I'll need clerks to go through our files, to save what can be saved. Whatever it takes, we will get the place together and plan to stay going."

It was three days before Perry Park Road was repaired and the telephone service restored. Loy had been in the hospital in Colorado Springs with a serious eye infection. It was fortunate she had entered the hospital before the storm hit, otherwise she might not have been able to get treatment. Bob was finally able to contact her and make arrangements for her return to the school. Link who had not been at school when the deluge came down, made it back as soon as the roads were restored. He managed to round up the horses and generally started getting things back to normal. Within a day or two of his return, Link drove the bulldozer up to Reno Sales to begin putting the terrain back in shape. After getting started, he turned the job over to Ray, his assistant. Somehow Ray managed to drive the dozer into the fourteen foot drop, where it disappeared from sight. Four days later, a second bulldozer was leased to excavate the first.

As quickly as possible, Bob and Bill Froh outlined a new fund drive to help pay for the repairs. At the same time, Bob found that the school's credit at the bank was excellent and that money could be borrowed for the purpose of making repairs to the campus. The school had fire, rain, windstorm and hail damage coverage in its insurance policy. Between \$3000 and \$4000 was collected for damage to the various roofs. But the major damages, which had been caused by mud and land slides, did not fall under the insurance coverage.

The fund-raising was successful but did not begin to cover the actual costs of returning the grounds to normalcy. The entire creek bed had to be bulldozed out and created anew. The supporting wall at the back of Reno Sales was renewed with a reinforced, poured concrete wall to replace the cinder blocks that had been there. Slowly through the ensuing days, the buildings were cleaned up, floors re-varnished, supplies replaced, records salvaged. The school was kept open and in about two month's time, the operation was running fairly smoothly.

But nothing was ever quite the same again. Indeed, dating from the flood, it seemed that a whole series of events occurred which were the result of bad decisions or poor execution.

One of the reasons that Bill Froh had been put in charge of the school was to bring a better financial balance to the operations. Everybody agreed that Bob was "too easy going." Bill knew how to "get tough" and cut down in the few areas where there was some waste and extravagance.

After the flood, one of Bill's first actions was to decide that the horses were no longer needed. Daisy Mae and Liberty Belle had expanded into a string of twenty-three mounts. Before Bill had suggested parting with the horses, the school had bought 200 acres of adjoining pasture land. It was not until the horses were gone, that everyone realized how "penny wise and pound foolish" it had been to buy the land. Not only had the land not really been needed for the horses, but the horses themselves were sorely missed by everyone.

Bill also began to clamp down on spending in the various departments. He had a serious run-in with Loy. He antagonized Dohn, Gene, Link, and Marji, who suggested that Bill should stay out of the library. Even Ruth said she was having difficulty working with him. It seemed he had a personality conflict with everyone and undermined the staff's morale.

Another major decision which was to affect the future of the school had been made before the flood. This involved the expansion of Freedom School into Rampart College. Although the basic two-week comprehensive course would be retained, the major efforts of the school were to be directed towards establishing the graduate school.

The reason for this shift appeared obvious to Bob, and indeed, he had been the prime mover behind the decision. Up until that time, Freedom School was viewed simply as a "unique" educational experience or as a vacation. Neither degrees nor credits were awarded.

Bob believed that if some well-known professors, like those involved in the Phrontistery

program, could be made part of the regular faculty, the school would then qualify to confer Masters' degrees and give credits for graduate level work. The graduate school would help move Freedom School out of the woods and into the mainstream of American education.

Bob's reasoning was based on the observation that very few people were interested in learning, per se. They wanted credentials, and Freedom School, as such, didn't supply them. By renaming Freedom School, Rampart College, and creating a graduate school, the operations would be meeting a market demand. This ought to help provide cash income and go part of the way, at least, towards making the school self-sustaining.

As the graduate program evolved, it became obvious that the existing facilities would not be sufficient. If two or three in-resident professors were to be present, there would need to be additional classrooms and housing. That meant at least one new school building.

Bob had Gene draw up plans for a new Reno Sales Lodge, to be located at a site in the meadow that was high enough to have escaped the creek overflow. Construction was begun in late 1965. At the same time, Bob obtained the services of two professors, putting both of them on five year contracts. One of them was James J. Martin, a well-known revisionist historian who had participated in the Phrontistery. Martin agreed to head up the History Department.

The other was Professor William Hutt, of the University of Capetown, South Africa. Hutt had reached retirement age, but was willing to come to America to continue to work in support of free enterprise. He accepted the post of Chairman of the Economics Department.

Despite the directive from the school Trustees that it become more self-sustaining, the movement into the graduate program -- by enlarging facilities and the hiring of two new professors -- put the school further into the red. The bank, which had lent the school over \$100,000, to help get it back on its feet after the flood, and to begin the construction of the new Reno Sales Lodge, continued to help the school make up its operating deficit by extending new loans. Even increased patronage from the Milliken organization, and the promises from a few substantial businessmen to contribute when the degree granting program was underway, were not enough to "steady the ship."

Bob finally had to ask Bill Froh for his resignation. Bill had done a good job, but he was no longer getting any cooperation out of the staff. Meanwhile the new Reno Sales Lodge was finished, the in-resident professors lined up, and the operation of the graduate program was ready to commence.

In 1967, Milliken requested that Bob conduct the sessions for their middle management trainees and executives on the east coast, rather than in Colorado. It was less expensive to fly Bob eastward, than it was to fly fifteen or twenty men to Colorado, ten or twelve times a year. This was agreed upon, and Bob made arrangements for Sy Leon and Butler Shaffer (and later, Roy Childs), who had been former students, to shoulder a good deal of the teaching load, so that he could be free to handle the Milliken seminars.

These arrangements seemed to bode well for Rampart College. A full schedule of classes could be run in Colorado, with South Carolina serving as an auxiliary campus for the Milliken groups. The Milliken seminars were one week sessions, and the company wanted 14 such seminars in 1967.

In Colorado, the school planned four one-week executive sessions and seven two-week comprehensive classes, as well as two, week-long workshops. Additionally, a thirteen week, one night a week class had been organized in Colorado Springs for local residents who were interested in covering much the same material that was available in the regular classes. In addition, Professors Martin and Hutt were setting up their curricula and promoting new enrollment of qualified graduate students for the Spring of 1968.

But all was not to remain as it had been planned. After Bob had conducted the first two Milliken seminars, he was informed that the company would cancel the balance of its Freedom School seminars for the year. They were in the midst of a company re-organization, and the purchase of a large chain of textile mills. Bob went to see Roger Milliken and Milliken agreed to pay for all the seminars. That decision made it possible for the school to remain in operation during the 1967 school year. But more problems came piling in. Regular enrollment dwindled. For the full year, only 82 students had

registered. At the same time, outside contributions fell off drastically.

The crushing blow came when the bank called and informed Bob that the school's line of credit was at an end. In 1968, the school would have to begin the process of reducing its debt. There would be no further extension of credit.

The original 320 acres that Bob and Loy had purchased in 1955 was held by the bank as collateral against loans totaling \$500,000. Taking into consideration the contracts with Hutt and Martin and various other obligations, the school's total indebtedness stood close to \$700,000.

And, as if that wasn't enough, another ugly problem reared its head. Professors Hutt and Martin were at odds with one another. Professor Hutt approached Bob and asked that he be released from his contract. He said that he and Martin had a personality conflict and, additionally, some of the ideas that Bob expressed made him "greatly uneasy." He believed that if he stayed on at Rampart College his own reputation would suffer. He was willing to forego the lucrative five year contract Bob had written him. Bob immediately released Hutt from the contract, and at least one large obligation of the school disappeared.

From bits and pieces of conversation he had heard, Bob assumed that Martin wished to cancel his contract, too. He believed that Martin felt the same way as Hutt, and would be ready to leave the school. Bob called him into his office and unilaterally canceled his contract, without giving Martin any say in the matter.

A few days later, Bob received a letter from Martin informing him that Martin was prepared to hold him to the original contract. Only one year of the original five had gone by, so there were four more years in which the school would have to pay him a salary and provide housing. Bob tried to explain to Martin that financial reverses made it impossible to honor his contract, and probably necessary to close the school. None of this made any difference to Martin who insisted on having his contract filled to the letter.

At the end of the school year in 1967, the staff was thinned out. Everyone seemed to harbor some anger or resentment toward Bob. The graduate school was canceled and arrangements made to pay Martin his year's salary for that year. Students who had enrolled for the graduate program were notified of its closing.

Bob sought out the real estate firm which had originally sold him the property and had them list it for sale. A buyer was soon found for the property. The Mennonites had been seeking a place which they could use for an educational endeavor and the Freedom School campus was just right.

Papers were signed and the bank was satisfied. In fact, the money received from the Mennonites enabled the school to meet all its obligations and still have a considerable sum left over. This permitted the Trustees to authorize the payment of the wages that had been accrued but never paid to Bob, Loy, Marji, Edy, and Ruth. The beautiful Freedom School campus passed out of their lives.

Bob felt that there were now two options open to him. He could close the school for good and use the remaining money to pay off Dr. Martin, and donate the balance to some other free enterprise organization, such as the Foundation for Economic Education or the Institute for Humane Studies. Or he could relocate the school and continue operations on a limited basis. In that case, Dr. Martin could be paid on a monthly basis.

Personally, Bob favored closing the school for good. His health was deteriorating and he had little inclination to work. It seemed as if he had labored night and day since 1955 to create the school. He had neglected family, friends, health, and everything else. He needed a good rest to regain his emotional and physical strength.

On the other hand, he had so much invested in the school emotionally, it seemed a shame to just let it all go. He had no reason to want to reward Dr. Martin with a large cash outlay. And he had no particular desire to donate money to any other libertarian organizations, none of which were fully consistent.

So when Sy Leon came forward and said that he and his wife, Riqui, and the four girls wanted to continue, Bob decided to keep the school alive. Sy suggested that they all move to Los Angeles, where

the largest market for freedom ideas existed. Mr. Milliken arranged for several new classes in 1969, which provided some income while the school was being relocated.

Bob flew to Los Angeles to see if he could locate a new site for Rampart College. He located a residence in Arcadia on two acres for \$65,000. He was warned that it could not be zoned for a school, but the house was large enough for the family, and even had some large rooms that could be used to teach in. Having encountered no trouble with the zoning authorities in Colorado, Bob ignored the realtor's warnings.

Right after Thanksgiving, 1968, Bob, Loy, and Virginia left the school and headed for Arcadia. Virginia wanted to remain with Bob and Loy and her mother was entirely willing. Sy, Riqui, Ruth, Edy, and Marji remained on hand to supervise the shipment of school supplies and books, and to surrender the property to the Mennonites.

Bob took possession of the house in Arcadia in the name of the school. Some months before, he and Sy and flown to Los Angeles together in order to locate a temporary school headquarters until such time as he could get the Arcadia property rezoned. They had located a suite of offices on the top floor of the First Western Bank Building in Santa Ana.

The bank wanted a co-signer on the lease. Bob had already signed it as President of Rampart College, even though in actuality he had turned over the financial and management affairs of Rampart to Sy. The bank now wanted Bob to sign the lease again, this time in his capacity as a private citizen, to guarantee the lease in the event the school could not fulfill its commitment. Bob protested this move on the part of the bank but met with shrugs from the bank official. He could "take it or leave it", so he "took it", much to his regret several years later.

Although the overhead in Santa Ana was only a fraction of what it had been in Colorado, the school's income had been greatly reduced, too. From the very beginning of their move to Los Angeles, the school was forced to dip into the reserves it had accumulated by its sale of the Colorado campus.

Bob was on a salary and paid rent to the school for the use of the Arcadia property. The income from the Milliken classes that Bob conducted in South Carolina went to the school. Sy, meanwhile, went to work to organize local classes and develop a variety of programs to spread the ideas and generate revenues for the school.

Two or three seminars were held in the offices at the bank, but the site was not suited to the type of seminar which had gained so much recognition in Colorado. To offset this, Sy organized two conferences on Catalina Island, off the coast of California, and several others at an inn, near Salinas. However all of these activities barely paid for themselves.

It was decided to try and conduct classes by mail. Bob wrote two home-study courses. One of them, "The Fundamentals of Liberty," covered the material he had presented in his comprehensive course in Colorado. The other, "Raising Children for Fun and Profit," was a libertarian approach to family life for young couples. A pair of 16mm color films was produced dealing with "The Meanings of Responsibility and Obligation" and "Property: A Basis for Morality." It was Sy's idea that the rental of these films would bring in support and income. Then Bob produced fifty, thirty-minute lectures on tape cassettes, which were offered for sale. Referred to as "LeFevre Commentaries," they dealt with "philosophical, ethical, and historical views on vital subjects of interest." Sy designed a magazine, titled "Tine Tree," (later changed to "RAP") which would sound the clarion call of freedom. No expense was spared to produce several issues, but there were few subscribers. None of these activities was successful from a business point of view.

Bob didn't have his heart in these efforts and this contributed to their lack of success. The years after 1968 were ones of decline, both in terms of health and morale. The loss Bob had experienced as a result of closing down the Colorado campus had wounded him deeply. He was heart sick and weary, and he became difficult to deal with. The only place where Bob obtained any real satisfaction was back in South Carolina teaching before the Milliken groups.

As failure piled on failure, friction began to build between Bob and Sy. Sy now began to argue with Bob about weaknesses in his presentations. Meanwhile Bob tried to encourage Sy as a teacher. Sy

realized how demanding a task it was, but invariably refused to set up any kind of rigorous schedule.

At last, the bad feeling between Sy and Bob reached a breaking point in late 1972. Either Bob would have to fire Sy, and put someone else in charge or let him take over completely.

Dr. Martin's contract had been paid off. The only on-going obligation related to the house in Arcadia and the bank lease. The house was sold at a profit, and the money from its sale was used to continue the operations of the school.

Bob finally made a decision. Sy had done a wonderful job as a public relations man in promoting the League of Non-Voters. Based on Bob's ideas about non-participation in the body politic, the League had been formed in February, 1972, to promote abstention from the ballot. To fire him seemed unfair and unjust.

So in January, 1973, Bob resigned from Rampart College. Rampart College was turned over intact to Sy and he became its president. Bob continued teaching in South Carolina and divorced these activities from those of Rampart College.

As time wore on, Sy was not able to make the lease payments on the Santa Ana offices. Since Bob had co-signed the lease, he was responsible for its payment, and used some of his savings, as well as personal earnings from the Milliken classes, to satisfy the bank lease. In the end, Sy closed the school and the adventure that Bob had begun so many years before came to an end.

“What is greatness? Philosophers have chided us that the great man is seldom popular and in many instances almost completely misunderstood during his lifetime. In fact, it has been pointed out that one of the attributes of true greatness, is an ability to stand alone when all others forsake you. Another attribute would be consistency; the ability to think things through to their logical conclusion and to stand by that conclusion though the heavens fall. A third would be moral and spiritual dedication, an unwillingness to pander to the tastes of hacks and mobs, so that truth relating to the highest virtues could be sustained.” April 1, 1957

Chapter 21 – A Man at Peace with Himself

With the demise of the Colorado campus, a decade of gradual decline in Bob’s health and morale set in. His management orientation lectures, still known as Freedom School, were continued for Milliken & Company in South Carolina. Depending on the demand for his services, Bob commuted 10 to 15 times a year between his home in Los Angeles and Spartanburg, where he delivered the week-long seminars. The income from Milliken and from his savings permitted Loy and him to live comfortably. They purchased a beautiful home in Orange County, California and converted the garage into an office and study. In addition to writing his articles and books, Bob carried on an extensive correspondence with libertarians all over the world.

Bob’s “extended” family was separated, once Rampart College closed its doors. For twenty-five years, they had done their best to make Freedom School a success, and the effort had taken its toll on them, too. Ruth took an apartment in Orange County, and set herself up as an independent contractor providing secretarial services to Bob and other clients. Edith, who had purchased her own home in Palmer Lake, Colorado, returned there to resume employment as a bookkeeper. She retired in the early 1980’s from her job in the Advertising Department at the *Gazette Telegraph*. Mare sought work in Colorado Springs as a physical therapist and made a home in an attractive trailer park. Despite their geographic separation, the “family” members remained close friends. Their greatest grief came in September, 1977, when Ruth passed away, after having suffered from cancer for a number of months.

The publication of two more of Bob’s books came in 1976. *The Power of Congress (as Congress Sees it)* was a compilation of correspondence that Bob had initiated in 1972 with all the members of the House of Representatives. Using as a model the arguments presented in Lysander Spooner’s *No Treason: The Constitution of No Authority*, Bob tried to get each Congressman to state how he viewed his official mandate. Did he represent his entire constituency (including those who voted against him, as well as those who did not vote), or did he represent only those who voted for him? In short, Bob wanted to determine how each officeholder viewed the nature of the political power that each exercised. He found that very few politicians in Washington had a clear picture of who they were supposed to represent, or what they were to do. The few that did have some idea of their function could not defend themselves in an exchange with an iconoclast, such as LeFevre. Bob asked them whether they thought our political system was even ‘consistent’ with honesty on the part of elected officials. He reasoned that since no Congressman or Senator can individually name those they claim to represent (the secret ballot prevents knowledge of those who actually voted for them) they were being totally dishonest in claiming to represent anyone but themselves.

In Bob’s second book, *Lift Her up Tenderly*, he wove an explanation of free market economics into the story of a young lady growing up in the United States during the mid-70’s. The two main characters were fictional, but their role models had been patterned after the relationship that had developed between Bob and Virginia DeCoursey. Like the Virginia in the story, Virginia DeCoursey moved out from under Bob and Loy’s tutelage, first attending college and then starting her own family.

Over the years, Bob had increasingly caught the attention of various writers. He was called on to talk to many libertarian groups, primarily in southern California, but also across the nation. A selection of Rose Wilder Lane’s correspondence, published as *The Lady and the Tycoon*, contained numerous

references to her summer visits to Freedom School. *God Bless You Mr. Rosewater* by Kurt Vonnegut obliquely referred to the work that had been done in Colorado. Bob's good friend from Colorado Springs, the noted science fiction writer, Robert Heinlein, had used Bob as the model for one of his characters (Professor Bernardo de la Paz) in *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*.

Bob continued to put on his executive seminars for numerous firms across the country, including the Love Box Company in Kansas and Short Stop (now the Customer Company) in northern California. His presentations at Santa Ana, in May, 1977, and in May, 1978, were published in pamphlet form under the titles *Good Government: Hope or Illusion?* and *Does Government Protection Protect?* He appeared at almost all the annual Future of Freedom Conferences, which had begun in 1969, often debating as well as lecturing. Besides his books and talks, Bob had also continued writing newspaper columns for the Freedom Newspapers. His columns appeared with regularity on the editorial pages of the Santa Ana Register, as well as in the *Gazette Telegraph* in Colorado Springs, where his name was well-known. Between 1973 and 1978, Bob also wrote and published a small quarterly magazine, known as *LeFevre's Journal*.

Close to the age of 70, Bob's failing health and weakened physical condition finally caught up with him. The strain of the Milliken lectures and the commuting took their toll. In October, 1979, his vocal chords simply refused to function. The steady lecturing, which had begun at Freedom School in Colorado, had worn them out. It was at this juncture that one of Bob's former students appeared. Kevin Cullinane, a graduate of the comprehensive course at Rampart College in 1967, contacted Bob to see how things were going with him and to see if he could be of any help to Bob. Kevin and his wife, Patricia, had been operating the Academy of the Rockies, a small, private school in Bonners Ferry, Idaho that concentrated on teaching the freedom philosophy through outdoor survival, farming and academic skills. Kevin was ready, able, and willing to fill Bob's shoes on the Milliken lecture platform and did so beginning in November, 1979.

Sometime after Kevin took over Freedom School in South Carolina, Bob required a knee operation. While under anesthesia, his doctors discovered a weakness in his heart. He barely pulled through, and required a long period of recuperation. He devoted his energies during most of 1980 and 1981 to writing his autobiographical memoirs. By the time that he completed them, his health had improved. During the next few years he wrote a science fiction novel, *Cosmo*, and a non-fiction work, titled *Fundamentals of Liberty*. He thought that the latter was his 'magnum opus,' the "hard copy" of his intellectual contributions to the philosophy of freedom.

It was in preparing his autobiography, that Bob was really able to come face-to-face with himself, and with what he had accomplished during his lifetime. What meaning did his life hold? What had he started on that day many years ago when he had sat down with Don Clayton at the radio station and expressed his dissatisfaction with the ordinary humdrum life of his existence? Was he any closer to understanding himself and others, and the world around him, than he had been in his early radio days?

Bob was the first to acknowledge that he had been an ignorant man in those days and had remained one ever after. He had experienced some colossal failures in his personal dealings with people, and he had made some enormously inept business decisions. Yet through it all his self-assigned task had been to understand, to comprehend, the truth, at least as he saw it, and then to act on it according to the best dictates of his conscience.

Looking back at his experiences with the Ballards and the "I Am" movement, he realized how gullible and downright dumb he had been. Even though he couldn't explain those "out-of-body" experiences, he had been a fool not to think for himself. Instead he had let himself be guided by "Saint Germain." As Bob escaped this influence, he sought to understand America and the meaning of patriotism. But as he began thinking for himself he experienced Army and political life first hand. He eventually came to realize that these were not ways to truth. The military hierarchy demanded unthinking obedience. Electoral politics required compromise, compromise, and more compromise, such that in the end all truth and principle were diluted past any point of recognition.

Bob's crusade had started in the desert of his own mind. It might have been implanted there by

his mother in childhood. She had taught him to question the rightness or wrongness of his conduct. As he struggled through the years, liberty and human freedom took on the shape of truth and beauty for him. He once told Harry Hoiles that his mistress was liberty, and it was that celestial being that he sought to serve. He came to realize, deeply, that education and individual self-control were the keys. His ten years of editorial writing at the *Gazette Telegraph* and at the Freedom School in the Rampart Range had all been devoted to creating the philosophical framework and educational edifice necessary to understanding and teaching the freedom philosophy.

Bob's struggle took on certain elements of simple greatness. He was seldom popular and often misunderstood. He stood alone, stating his beliefs quietly, yet firmly. He tried to achieve consistency of thought, to think ideas through to their logical conclusions. He exhibited a moral and spiritual dedication, an unwillingness to pander to the tastes of the mob or the body politic. He realized that truth is not a half-way place. As he had once said in an early editorial, "telling the truth can be and should be and is the ultimate goal of our efforts. Our objective is to tell the truth without compromise. We refuse to place our own popularity in the scales with truth. Our effort must be aimed at destroying evil ideas, not destroying the people who hold those ideas."

With an almost childish innocence, Bob realized that nothing good or real came from saying things that weren't truthful. He also became aware that the more he knew, the more he broadened the horizons of his own ignorance. This kept him humble, for the search after truth was a never ending odyssey. Bob believed that he could remain loyal to the search and "Be admirable in all things." If in the course of his lifetime he approached these goals, if he had been able to practice total self-control and total self-discipline, then he could consider himself a freedom philosopher and a man at peace with himself. He could ask for nothing more.

And in spite of his lack of expertise and his apparent bumbling ways, at times, he had accomplished much in his lifetime. Who else could lay claim to having made as many mistakes as he did, and in the process made friends with at least a hundred of the biggest and most important people in the country? Who else, starting out as poor as he did, could lay claim to having raised more than a million dollars and to have successfully put a freedom school together and run it for 16 years against all the advice and nay-saying of all the "experts" in the business? And in the process, he created for himself professional careers in radio and television, and finally in the written media, as an author of literally thousands of editorials and more than a dozen books and monographs.

But perhaps his greatest accomplishment was as a teacher. LeFevre truly believed that ideas moved the world. Although many of the ten thousand students that heard him teach the "Fundamentals of Liberty" drifted away from the idealism that he hoped to instill, there were a number of thinkers of all ages that received his message. If people had been mentally conditioned into believing in socialism, then each one had to be convinced that freedom and private ownership were correct. This was an educational process, not a political one. Bob's idea behind teaching was not to change anybody, for only the individual can effect change in him or herself. Bob understood that this was the only possible way a free society could come about. He believed if it were done properly then it would never have to be done again.

Bob urged his students to think reflectively. Don't depend on others to do it for you. Volunteer your help when requested. Be the kind of human being you would want others to be to you. Be above reproach. Be admirable in all things. Understanding and stating the truth were the ultimate goal. Bob realized that others might reject what he understood to be true. However, he knew that time was on the side of those who presented the most consistent case for liberty. Truth would always prevail. Bob always liked to say that he maintained the "high ground." Only the truth was real and only the truth was safe. "Know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Author's Afterword

Bob and Loy left Los Angeles near the end of April, 1986 to drive cross country to visit Kevin and Patricia Cullinane, and to attend my wedding in Campobello, South Carolina. Bob found it necessary to rest a few days in El Paso, Texas, but upon regaining his strength, he and Loy completed their trip eastward.

It was a clear and sunny day when Julie and I were wed under the pine trees in the field at Freedom Country (the Cullinane home and current Freedom School campus) on May 3, 1986. Bob watched the ceremony and joined us at our reception, and luncheon afterwards. He seemed in fairly decent health and was certainly in good spirits, and as sharp intellectually as he had ever been.

As happened many times in Bob's life, a strange coincidence of events took place. Our wedding photographer was so enchanted with the character of Bob's face, that he invited him to come to his studio the following Monday, to sit for a series of photographs. No one suspected that those would be the last pictures taken of him. Bob and Loy left Freedom Country May 6th, after a delightful stay with the Cullinanes, and in a week's time had driven as far as Flagstaff, Arizona. While in a motel, Bob passed away in his sleep on May 13, 1986.

Bob was one of my closest friends. I looked upon him as I would have a father or grandfather. He and I worked together during the last two and one-half years of his life, and I learned much from him. Our first project was the publication of *Neither Bullets Nor Ballots*, which his Pine Tree Press published for The Voluntaryists in December, 1983. In late November of the following year Bob approached me about writing his biography. He had found it impossible to get a publisher for his 2,000 page autobiographical manuscript, and he wanted someone to pare his story down to manageable proportions. I accepted that challenge, and Bob lived just long enough to read and comment on the third draft of the book you are now holding in your hands.