

MY LOBOTOMY

*Howard Dully and
Charles Fleming*





MY LOBOTOMY

— A Memoir —

HOWARD DULLY
and Charles Fleming



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[**Title Page**](#)

[**Dedication**](#)

[**This is a true story...**](#)

[**Preface**](#)

[Chapter 1](#) [**June**](#)

[Chapter 2](#) [**Lou**](#)

[Chapter 3](#) [**762 Edgewood**](#)

[Chapter 4](#) [**Trouble**](#)

[Chapter 5](#) [**Dr. Freeman**](#)

[Chapter 6](#) [**DULLY, Howard \(F: Rodney L.\)**](#)

[Chapter 7](#) [**My Lobotomy**](#)

[Chapter 8](#) [**Big Enough and Ugly Enough**](#)

[Chapter 9](#) [**Asylum**](#)

[Chapter 10](#) [**Rancho Linda**](#)

[Chapter 11](#) [**Agnews. Again.**](#)

[Chapter 12](#) [**Homeless**](#)

[Chapter 13](#) [**Barbara**](#)

[Chapter 14](#) [**Journey**](#)

[Chapter 15](#) [**Archives**](#)

[Chapter 16](#) [**Broadcast**](#)

[*One Last Word*](#)

[*Acknowledgments*](#)

[*Copyright*](#)

*To all of us, victims and survivors,
who keep going no matter what*

This is a true story. However, in the interest of protecting the privacy of certain individuals, some names and identities have been changed.



Preface

My name is Howard Dully. I'm a bus driver. I'm a husband, and a father, and a grandfather. I'm into doo-wop music, travel, and photography.

I'm also a survivor: In 1960, when I was twelve years old, I was given a transorbital, or "ice pick" lobotomy.

My stepmother arranged it. My father agreed to it. Dr. Walter Freeman, the father of the American lobotomy, told me he was going to do some "tests." It took ten minutes and cost two hundred dollars.

The surgery damaged me in many ways. But it didn't "fix" me, or turn me into a robot. So my family put me into an institution.

I spent the next four decades in and out of insane asylums, jails, and halfway houses. I was homeless, alcoholic, and drug-addicted. I was lost. I knew I wasn't crazy. But I knew something was wrong with me. Was it the lobotomy? Was it something else? I hadn't been a bad kid. I hadn't even hurt anyone. Or had I? Was there something I had done, and forgotten—something so horrible that I deserved a lobotomy?

I asked myself that question for more than forty years. I thought about my lobotomy all the time, but I never talked about it. It was my terrible secret. What had been so *wrong* with me?

In 1998, when I was fifty, things changed. I had suffered a heart attack. I had married a woman I really loved. I had gotten clean and sober, and gone back to school and earned a degree. People who met me didn't know I'd had a lobotomy, or spent ten years in mental hospitals. They met a big man—I'm six foot seven and 330 pounds—with a big mustache and a big laugh whose job was driving special education kids to school on a yellow school bus.

They didn't see the man who was tormented by his shadowy past. Then Dr. Freeman died. My stepmother died. My dad and I had never talked about the past, and now he was in poor health, too. I was afraid all the people who really knew what had happened to me would be gone soon.

So I decided to try to find out what had been done to me. I sat down in front of my computer, logged on to the Internet, and typed in the words "Dr. Walter Freeman."

So began a journey that, four years later, brought me to Washington, D.C. I had met a pair of radiologists

producers who were doing a program on lobotomy for NPR. They had arranged permission for me to see ~~Dr. Walter Freeman's lobotomy archives.~~ Even though Freeman personally lobotomized more than five thousand patients and paved the way for the lobotomies of tens of thousands more, I was the first one in history to show up asking to see his files.

The archivists handed me a manila folder. On the front of it were the words "DULLY, Howard."

The great mystery of my life was inside. The question that had haunted me for more than forty years was about to be answered.



This much I know for sure: I was born in Peralta Hospital in Oakland, California, on November 3, 1948. My parents were Rodney Lloyd Dully and June Louise Pierce Dully. I was their first child, and they named me Howard August Dully, after my father's father. Rodney was twenty-three. June was thirty-four.

They had been married less than a year. Their wedding was held on Sunday, December 28, 1947, three days after Christmas, at one o'clock in the afternoon, at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Sacramento, California. The wedding photographs show an eager, nervous couple. He's in white tuxedo and tails, with a white carnation in his lapel. She's in white satin, and a veil decorated with white flowers. They are both dark-haired and dark-eyed. Together they are cutting the cake—staring at the cake, not at each other—and smiling.

A reception followed at 917 Forty-fifth Street, at the home of my mother's uncle Ross and aunt Ruth Pierce. My father's mother attended. So did his two brothers. One of them, his younger brother Kenneth, wore a tuxedo all the way up from San Jose on the train.

My father's relatives were railroad workers and lumberjack types from the area around Chehalis and Centralia, Washington. My dad spent his summers in a lumber camp with one of his uncles. They were logging people.

My father's father was an immigrant, born in 1899 in a place called Revel, Estonia, in what would later be the Soviet Union. When he left Estonia, his name was August Tulle. When he got to America, where he joined his brothers, Alexander and John—he had two sisters, Marja and Lovisa, who he left behind in Estonia—he was called August Dully. He later added the first name Howard, because it sounded American to him.

My father's mother was the child of immigrants from Ireland. She was born Beulah Belle Cowan in Litchfield, Michigan, in 1902. Her family later moved to Portland, Oregon, in time for Beulah to attend high school, where she was so smart she skipped two grades.

August went to Portland, too, because that's where his brothers were. According to his World War II draft registration card, he was brown-haired, blue-eyed, and of medium height. He got work as a window dresser for the Columbia River Ship Company. He became a mason. He met the redheaded Beulah at a dance. She told her mother that night, "I just met the man I'm going to marry." She was

sixteen. A short while later, they tied the knot and took a freighter to San Francisco for the honeymoon, and stayed. A 1920 U.S. Census survey shows them living in an apartment building on Fourth Street. Howard A. Dully was now a naturalized citizen, working as a laborer in the shipyards.

Sometime after, they moved to Washington, where my grandfather went to work on the railroad. They started having sons—Eugene, Rodney, and Kenneth—before August got sick with tuberculosis. Beulah believed he caught it on that freighter going to San Francisco. He died at home, in bed, on New Year's Day, 1929. My dad was three years old. His baby brother was only fourteen months old.

Beulah Belle never remarried. She was hardheaded and strong-willed. She said, "I will never again have a man tell me what to do."

But she had a hard time taking care of her family. She couldn't keep up payments on the house. When she lost it, the boys went to stay with relatives. My dad was sent to live with an aunt and uncle at age six, and was shuffled from place to place after that. By his own account, he lived in six different cities before he finished high school—born in Centralia, Washington; then shipped around Oregon to Marshfield, Grants Pass, Medford, and Eugene; then to Ryderwood, Washington, where he and his brother Kenneth lived in a logging camp with their former housekeeper Evelyn Townsend and her husband, Orville Black.

At eighteen, Rod left Washington to serve with the U.S. Army, enlisting in San Francisco on December 9, 1943. Though he later was reluctant to talk about it, I know from my uncles that he was sent overseas and stationed in France. He served with the 723rd Railroad Division, laying track in an area near L'Aigle, France, that was surrounded by mines. One of my uncles told me that my father never recovered from the war. He said, "The man who went away to France never came back. He was damaged by what he saw there."

But another of my uncles told me Rod bragged about having a German girlfriend, so I guess it wasn't all bad. Not as bad as his brother Gene, who joined the army and got sent to Australia and New Guinea, where he developed malaria and tuberculosis and almost died. He weighed one hundred pounds when he came back to America, and lived at a military hospital in Livermore, California, for a long time after that.

By the time Rod finished his military service, his mother had left her job with Western Union Telegraph, in the Northwest, and moved to Oakland to work for the Southern Pacific Railroad. She was later made a night supervisor, working in the San Francisco office on Market Street. She would still be working there when I was born.

My mother's folks came from the other end of the economic spectrum. June was the daughter of Daisy Seulberger and Hubert O. Pierce—German on her mother's side, English on her father's. Daisy grew up wealthy, married Pierce, and had three children: Gordon, June, and Hugh. When Pierce died, Daisy married Delos Patrician, another wealthy Bay Area businessman. She moved her family to Oakland, into a huge, three-story shingled home on Newton Avenue. June spent her childhood there.

After his military service, my father relocated to the Bay Area and started taking classes at San Francisco Junior College, learning to be a teacher and doing his undergraduate work in elementary

education.

Over the summers, he got part-time work at a popular high Sierras vacation spot, Tuolumne Meadows, in Yosemite. He met a young woman there, working as a housekeeper, who captured his eye. Her name was June.

She was tall, dark, and athletic, and for Rod she was a real catch. She was a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, where she had been active with the Alpha Xi Delta sorority, and had a certificate to teach nursery school. She was from a well-known Oakland family, and for several years she had been a fixture on the local social scene. During the war she had worked in Washington D.C., as a private secretary to the U.S. congressman from her district. When she returned to Oakland she often had her name in the newspapers, hosting luncheons and teas for her society friends.

She had been courted by quite a few young men, but her controlling mother, Daisy, drove all the boyfriends away. When she met Rod, June was still beautiful, but she was no longer what you'd call young, especially not at that time. She was thirty-two. Being unmarried at that age during the 1940s was almost like being a spinster.

Their courtship was sudden and passionate. They fell in love over the summer of 1946, and saw each other in San Francisco and Berkeley through the next year. When June returned to work in Yosemite in the summer of '47, this time at Glen Aulin Camp, Rod left for the lumberyards of northern California and southern Oregon, where he was determined to make enough money to marry June in style. His letters over that summer were eager and filled with love. He was full of plans and promises—for his career, their wedding, the house he would buy her, the family they would have. He was worried that he was not the man June's mother wanted, or from the right level of society, but he was determined to prove himself. "I expect to make you happy. I won't marry you and take you into a life you won't be happy in," he wrote. "I'm happy now, much happier than I've ever been before in my life, cause you're my little dream girl and my dream is coming true."

After a hard summer of logging work, the plans for the wedding were made. The ceremony was held three days after Christmas in Sacramento. According to a newspaper story a week later, the couple went "honeymooning in Carmel" after a ceremony in which "the bride wore a white satin gown with a sweetheart neckline, long sleeves ending in points at the wrists and full skirt with a double peplum pointed at the front. Her full-length veil of silk net was attached to a bandeau of seed pearls and orange blossoms. She also carried a handkerchief which has been in her family for 75 years."

The bride was given away by her uncle Ross, in whose Sacramento house she had been living. The groom's best man was his brother Kenneth.

According to family stories, some of June's family objected. Rod was too young for June, Daisy said, and didn't have good prospects. June may have been uncomfortable with the relative poverty she was marrying into, too. My dad later told people that he got into a fender bender not long after he married June, and that his feelings were hurt when she said she was embarrassed to be seen driving around in his banged-up car.

With a wife to support, my father left school. He and my mother moved up north, to Medford

Oregon, where Rod returned to the lumber business and went to work as a lumber tallyman with the Southern Oregon Sugar Pine Corporation in Central Point, two miles outside of Medford.

Soon the young married couple had a baby on the way—me. Near the end of her term, my mother left my dad in Medford and moved in with her mother in Oakland, a pattern she would repeat for the births of all her children.

If everything had gone as planned, she probably would have returned to Medford and raised a family.

But my father had some bad luck. One morning on a work break he became incoherent and had to be taken by ambulance to a Medford hospital. He was treated for sun stroke and sent back to work. When his symptoms returned, he saw another doctor and was treated for heat stroke. When he still did not improve, Rod left Medford and went to live with June's family in the big house in Oakland. He recovered but was told not to resume any kind of hard, physical outdoor work. The lumber business was over for him. He would never return to the Northwest.

I was carried to full term, according to the birth records, and I was a normal, healthy child delivered early in the morning by a doctor named John Henry. I was a big baby—nine pounds and twenty-four inches long. (I come by that naturally. My parents were both big. My mother was six feet and my father was six feet three inches. My younger brother, Brian, is six feet ten inches.) Photographs of me when I was a baby show a big, goofy-looking infant with bright eyes and a healthy appetite. In one picture I am reaching out for a slice of cake. My father says I was a cheerful, happy, friendly baby who was doted upon by his mother.

They gave me my grandfather's adopted American name—Howard August Dully. To this day my uncle Kenneth says I'm the one Dully who looks most like him.

My father's occupation was listed on my birth certificate as "Talley man, Southern Sugar Pine Lumber Co., Medford, Ore." But he never went back to that job. After my birth, he moved his new family into a one-bedroom apartment at Spartan Village, a low-income student-housing complex near San Jose State University. He got a sales job at San Jose Lumber, a lumberyard right down the street from our apartment, and resumed his studies at the university.

I have very few memories of living at Spartan Village. The clearest one is a memory of fear. There was a playground there and my dad built me a choo-choo train out of fifty-gallon oil drums and lumber. I was proud of it, and proud that my dad had built it.

But there was a big, open field of weeds next to the apartment complex. I was afraid of that field. I was afraid of what was in those weeds. There was a low place in the center of the field that kids would run into and disappear. I was afraid they wouldn't come out. I knew that if I went into that field I would fall in and not be able to come out. It's the first thing in my life I remember being afraid of.

In August 1951, when I was two and a half years old, Rodney and June had another son. They named him Brian. Like me, he was born healthy. I now had a roommate in our Spartan Village apartment.

In some families, the arrival of the second son is the end of the world for the first son, because no

he has to share his mother with a stranger. Not in my family. My dad said Brian's birth did not have any impact on my close relationship with June. ~~He was responsible for Brian, while she concentrated all her love on me.~~ "I was the one taking care of Brian," he said. "All she cared about was little Howard."

My father told me later that I was the most important person in my mother's life—more important even, than him. I was the number-one son. "I could've dropped dead and it wouldn't have made a bit of difference," my dad said. "She had you."

When he completed his degree, my father was hired as an elementary school teacher in a one-room schoolhouse in a little town called Pollock Pines in the Sierras, about halfway between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe.

Most of my early childhood memories come from this place. Our house sat on a hill that sloped down to a bend in Highway 50, the two-lane road that led from Sacramento to Lake Tahoe. We had a little cocker spaniel named Blackie. He was hit by a car on that road, and killed, when I was about two years old.

I also remember sitting in a coffee shop in Placerville, having a soda with my mother. We were waiting for my father. Music was playing.

My mother's uncle Ross and aunt Ruth had a huge mountain cabin, so big it was more like a hunting lodge, farther up Highway 50, near a famous old resort called Little Norway. It had been built by my great-grandfather—Grandma Daisy's father—in the 1930s. The main building, which was two stories and filled with moose heads, was surrounded by pine trees and smaller cabins that were so primitive they had dirt floors. We used to stay in one of them when I was little.

In the winter, the snow was so deep we cut steps in it and climbed onto the cabin roof. Later on I learned to ski there, but my earliest memories of the snow are unhappy ones. I stepped into a snow drift that was so deep I sank in up to my waist and couldn't get out. This frightened me. I thought some kind of snow monster was going to come and eat me, and I began to cry.

My father thought it was the funniest thing he'd ever seen. I was terrified, but he was laughing. That made me mad at him.

I think I was a happy child. I remember walking the two blocks from our apartment to my father's work every day, my mother carrying the sack lunch she'd made for him. But I also remember not liking the way my mother made me dress. I had to wear colored shirts, and those little shorts that have straps to hold them up. They looked like those German lederhosen. Even as a kid I thought they were lame. I probably wanted to wear blue jeans.

My mother liked being a mother and she took naturally to it. In my favorite picture of her from that time, she's wearing a cap-sleeve shirt, a wide black belt, and a billowing skirt, and she's standing under a clothesline in the Spartan Village yard. She looks like she's calling to me, and she looks happy.

Family members have told me that she enjoyed life and laughed a lot. She wasn't serious, like my

dad. She was more carefree, and liked to have fun.

In my memory, she was a very loving and indulgent mother. I remember being held and hugged and kissed by her. I remember being loved. I have fleeting pictures in my head of green grass, of sunshine, of running past my mother's full skirts. I remember her laughing.

My father was restless and ambitious. His desire for a better job moved us again. He left the one-room schoolhouse where he had been teaching in Pollock Pines and got another elementary school job in the nearby Camino school district.

He later took a job where his brother Kenneth was working, in the Barron Gray Cannery in San Jose packing pineapple and other fruit for Dole. We moved in with Kenneth and his wife, Twila, and the four children in Saratoga, a San Jose suburb. This lasted until my mother got pregnant again.

Just like she did when she was pregnant with me and with Brian, she went to live with her mother for the last few months of her pregnancy. My dad stayed in Saratoga with me and Brian, crowded in his brother's house, while everyone waited for the baby to arrive.

Then he was born, and it was very bad. He was brain-damaged—so severely that the doctors said he was not expected to survive. The doctors said he had only half a brain. His name was Bruce. He was born in Oakland, in the Highland-Alameda County Hospital, and he stayed there.

But so did my mother. Something was wrong with her, too, and it was serious. The doctors had missed it. Maybe the symptoms had been covered up by the problems with her pregnancy. Maybe the doctors were so concerned about what was wrong with the baby that they didn't notice something was wrong with her. Maybe, like my father insisted later, it was because her family was too cheap to get her to a good private hospital.

Whatever the reason, by the time they figured out she was sick, it was too late for them to help her.

My mother died in the hospital twelve days after Bruce was born. Not until an autopsy was performed did her doctors realize she had cancer of the colon. According to her death certificate, the cause of death was "peritonitis, acute," brought on by a perforated colon, which was caused by colon cancer. The doctor's notes say she had been suffering from the cancer for months, but her death had followed the perforation of the colon by a matter of hours.

That is why my father almost did not see his wife before she died. It took a full day for someone from Daisy's family to call him at work and let him know there was a problem. When he finally arrived at the hospital, he had to meet with a doctor before he could see his wife. Someone from Daisy's family—her brother Gordon, my father said—had told the doctors that June and Rod were separated, and that he wasn't really part of the family anymore. My father had to convince the doctors this wasn't true before they would let him in.

By the time he got to see her, my mother was in a coma. Her eyes were open, but she was incoherent. She died that night. She was thirty-nine.

The autopsy was conducted the following day. Her own physician participated. He hadn't known

anything about the disease that killed her until after she was dead. Some family members would remember later that she had complained to her doctor repeatedly that she didn't feel well, that she had pains. The doctor had chalked it up to morning sickness, and paid no attention to it.

My mother died without ever leaving the Oakland county hospital, without ever saying good-bye to her two sons, and maybe without ever saying hello to her newborn. I don't know if she ever even laid eyes on Bruce.

Years later, I learned that she was cremated, and that her ashes were interred in the Chapel of Memories cemetery in Oakland. My father told me that the funeral service was attended by dozens of June's personal friends, by my father's mother and two brothers, and by June's two brothers—but not by her mother.

I don't know if my parents' marriage was a happy one. My dad always said it was. I have no reason to think it wasn't. But I learned many years later that one of the very last things my mother did in her life was change my name. I became, legally, Howard August *Pierce* Dully, taking on her maiden name as my second middle name. My father's mother told me my dad was very angry about this. June had done it without his permission.

Why? What difference would it make? Why did she care if Pierce was part of my name?

I never found out. But I did learn, years later, that after June's death her mother, Daisy, and brother Gordon tried to have me and Brian taken away from my father. Daisy filed papers to have me adopted by Gordon, so he could take us away from our dad and raise us as his own.

"Gordon wanted to adopt the kids" my dad told me later. "*He* would raise them, himself. He said my dad was a lousy father, that June should never have married me. If I'd had a gun, I would have shot him."

I wasn't conscious of any of this at the time. All I knew was I missed my mother, and she was gone. No one told me she was dead. I didn't understand that she was dead. But I understood that she was gone. My father told me so. One evening sometime after my mother's death, he told me she wasn't coming home.

It was almost dark. We were alone in the car. We were in San Jose, riding down Seventh Street in my dad's Plymouth station wagon. He told me my mother had gone away. She wasn't coming back. She wasn't ever going to see her again.

I was four years old, and I got very, very upset. I threw a terrible tantrum. I screamed and yelled. I needed to see my mother. I cried my eyes out and shouted that I wanted to see my mother. I *demand*ed to see my mother.

It might have been better if he had just told me she was dead. Then I would have understood maybe, what was going on. As it was, I thought she had left me. I was afraid she didn't want to see me. I was afraid she didn't love me.

What other explanation could there be? Why else would your mother leave you and never come back again, except that she didn't love you?

This was too painful for me. So I decided she was still there, somehow. I thought she could see me. ~~She knew what I was doing. She was nearby, somewhere, smiling down at me, or crying, about what she saw me doing.~~ I wasn't alone, even when I felt alone, because she was watching me.

I didn't tell anyone that I felt this way, or had these ideas. Maybe I knew it was all imagination, or maybe I was afraid they would tell me it wasn't true. I kept it to myself.

This was a very hard time for me. And I see now how hard it must have been for my father. He was twenty-seven years old. His wife—the woman he loved, the mother of his children—was dead. He himself had already suffered a stroke. He had two sons at home under the age of five, and a third son severely retarded, who was probably going to die but who would require permanent professional care if he didn't. He was estranged from his in-laws, who had money—and who had conspired to take his sons away from him—and his own family had no money to speak of. And he didn't even have his own place. He was staying with his brother, living off the charity of his family. It must have been hard for that kind of man, born and raised like he was, to live like that.

For a few months after my mother's death we continued to live with my uncle Kenneth. We had to. My dad had started a new career. He had just gotten a new job, teaching elementary school in Los Altos.

Most people who know San Jose these days think of it as the center of the Silicon Valley, or as a bedroom community for the wealthier city of San Francisco—in either case, a place where rich people live. It's the oldest city in California—it was founded in 1777—and it was once the capital city of the original Spanish colony of Nueva California. For a while its primary business was supplying farms and canneries to feed San Francisco. Later on it would be a big military center. But when I was a kid it was just another working-class town.

There was always money around San Jose, but most of it didn't live there. Even if they worked in or owned businesses in San Jose, most of the people with money went home at night to places like Palo Alto, home of Stanford University, and ritzy communities like Mountain View, Saratoga, and Los Altos. Especially Los Altos, where rich people lived in big houses and drove expensive automobiles. These were people who played golf and rode horses. They didn't live in low-income housing for married students or have to move their families into their brothers' homes because they didn't have anyone to watch their kids.

Even though it was only ten miles away from my uncle Kenneth's house, Los Altos was like a different world. That's where my dad went to work every day. He had started teaching fifth grade at Hillview Elementary. Los Altos is where he spent his days before coming home at night to share the crowded house with his brother Kenneth.

It wasn't perfect, but pretty soon we lost that, too. My aunt Twila couldn't take the overcrowding. Kenneth told his brother that we had to go. My dad, who had spent his own childhood bouncing from place to place, had to find a new home for us, again.

My father's mother, my grandmother Beulah, was still living in San Francisco and working in the Southern Pacific offices on Market Street. To help us out, she moved down to Palo Alto and rented a little house—a kind of factory worker's house, with two bedrooms, a small kitchen, and a small living room—from a local Christian Scientist woman, and we all moved in together.

Beulah was a short, stout, tough Irish redhead who was very cosmopolitan and stylish, and extremely direct. Because Beulah was a strange name to us, we called her Grandma Boo. She was a working woman, and she had no time for nonsense. She ran a strict household, and, like my dad, she wasn't what you would call affectionate. Every afternoon she'd walk down to the train station and take the train north to work. Early the next morning she'd come back.

Because she worked and my father worked, someone had to come in and take care of the children. So my dad found a neighbor who would watch me and Brian during the day. She served us sugar-and-cinnamon toast. I remember the toast, I think, because I remember being hungry. I remember thinking about food a lot, and I remember searching for it in that house.

It was a dark, crowded place, with Grandma Boo's things and our things piled up everywhere. There was one bedroom for me and Brian at the front of the house, and one bedroom for my dad and Boo at the back. It had a curtain running down the middle of it, so they could each have some privacy. Hidden away in a corner of the room was a big cookie tin where Boo kept these delicious, soft oatmeal cookies.

I was *crazy* for those oatmeal cookies. I'd sneak down the hall and open the tin—while my dad and my grandmother were right there in the room, sleeping—and steal a couple of cookies. And not just once or twice, either. I made a career out of stealing those cookies.

We lived that way with Grandma Boo for about a year. I got old enough to start kindergarten. I remember being afraid to go. The school seemed like a big, scary place. I was afraid I'd get hurt there or I'd get lost, or I wouldn't be able to find my way home.

It wasn't just the school. I was scared of a lot of things. I was afraid there were crocodiles under my bed at night. Later, when we moved again and I had to take the bus to school, I was afraid of that, too. I was so afraid that I'd get on the wrong bus, or get off at the wrong school. Things like that really terrified me.

Maybe it was because of my mother's death, but I was afraid a lot of the time. I remember having terrible nightmares.

One of them stayed with me into adulthood. In this dream, I am walking on a deserted city street. It's cold, and the city is gray. A long white car pulls slowly to the curb, and the door opens. I can't see who's inside, but I know they have come to get me. Then a rope, its end tied into a noose, comes out of the car and begins to slither along the sidewalk toward me. I know it's going to catch me and pull me in. I know I can't escape. I'm terrified and I want to run away, but I can't. I can't escape.

I always wake up before I find out who's in the car, or where they're taking me.

Other than the night terrors, I think I was a pretty normal kid. I was physical. I liked playing games

I had a mechanical mind. I would spend hours underneath the kitchen sink, pulling out all the pots and pans and trying to figure out how to stack them so they'd fit under there again. My father used to bring home things like broken radio sets for me to play with. I'd pull them apart and try to put them back together. My father always told people how impressed he was that I could put them back the right way—always figuring which tube went where, even though I was so little.

I don't remember whether I ever wondered what had happened to Bruce. To this day, I'm not sure where he was living at that time. I know that he surprised the doctors who delivered him and did not die as an infant. At some point he was able to leave the hospital. I found out later that my dad had found a Christian Science woman to look after him. But at the time his existence was all wrapped up in my mother's death. We never, ever talked about him.

In the end, my dad's new teaching job saved us from our cramped living arrangement with Grandmother Boo. The families of Los Altos and the parents of my father's students at Hillview Elementary heard about my mother's death, and they came to our rescue. We started getting invitations to dinner. Mom and Brian and my dad went to dinner at a bunch of people's houses. They fed us and clucked over us and made sure we were doing all right. They helped my dad with things like sewing and washing.

One of the women was especially helpful. She started doing laundry for us. Then she offered to babysit me and Brian. Her name was Lucille, but everyone called her Lou.



My mother was a tall, handsome woman with strong features, wavy black hair, and a very feminine sense of fashion. In all of the pictures I have of her, she's dressed like she's going someplace special. She's wearing dresses, or nice skirts and blouses. She has her hair done nicely and she's wearing makeup. She looks pretty, and she looks like she looks that way on purpose. She's spent some time making herself beautiful.

Lou was the opposite. She was shorter, and plainer, and kind of mannish. She wore her curly hair cut short. She hardly ever wore makeup. In the pictures I have of her, she's dressed like she's going to work in the yard. She wore jeans, or pants, or slacks, but hardly ever skirts or dresses—which was unusual for that time—and checked shirts, like a farm woman. She was slender, and had a sort of girlish figure, but her presentation was more masculine than feminine. She wore round tortoiseshell glasses. She smoked non-filter cigarettes. She was all business.

Her full name was Shirley Lucille Hardin. She was the daughter of Herbert Sidney Hardin and Shirley Lucille Jackson, who was in turn the daughter of George William Gresley-Jackson and Shirley Lucille Daughterman. Lou was born in San Francisco—just like her mother and grandmother before her.

Her childhood was very unstable. Lou was born in 1919. Her mother was born in 1900. So her mother was a just teenager when she had Lou. According to family stories, her mother was a real 1920s flapper, who bobbed her hair and danced the Charleston.

Lou's parents didn't have any interest in raising a child. Herbert seems to have disappeared right after her birth. Her mother then turned Lou over to the care of her own mother. She was raised by her grandmother, a widow whose husband passed away when Lou was a little girl.

Lou's mother went on to have at least four husbands. With one of them she had another daughter named Virginia, a few years after Lou was born. Lou's father, Herbert, remarried a woman named Daphne, who was known as Nana, and spent most of his life in Idaho. He was an alcoholic, and worked as a house painter. After he retired, he moved back to the San Jose area, where he and Nana became good friends with Shirley and her new husband, Lynn Swindell. One of my cousins remembers them all getting together for bridge games.

So Lou, like my dad, didn't have a normal childhood, surrounded by good, traditional role models for healthy parenting.

Lou grew up around San Francisco. She had moved to the San Jose area by the time she was a teenager, and was going to Mountain View High School when she met her first husband. His name was Red Cox. He was a teenage runaway from Alabama. Red and Lou waited until they both graduated—and until Lou's grandmother had died—to get married. That same year, her mother married her fourth and last husband. By then, Lou's mother had moved to the San Jose area, too. For the first time in her life, Lou had a relationship with her real mother.

Lou and Red had two sons, Cleon and George. But she didn't take naturally to motherhood—at least not according to her niece, Linda Pickering, who as a little girl spent a lot of time around Lou. Linda remembered watching Lou raising George. When he was a little baby he would sit in his bassinet and cry. Finally Linda's mother would say, "Lou, that boy is hungry. Why don't you feed him?" Lou would say, "I just fed him. He isn't due to eat again for another hour." Then Linda's dad would say, "You better feed that baby, or else get him a watch."

"Because of the way she grew up," Linda said, "nobody ever taught her how to be a mother."

By the time she met my father, Lou was already divorced and was living with Cleon and George in the house in Los Altos that she'd shared with Red.

I don't remember meeting her. I don't remember her babysitting us, or doing our laundry, even though that's what I was told later. All I knew is one day she wasn't there, and the next day she was. My father said later that he had known her for about a year and a half before he proposed and she accepted. Soon enough, we all moved in together.

That would have been about 1955, when I was seven. *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Blackboard Jungle* were hits at the movies, which meant that rock 'n' roll and the American teenager were both official on the map. On TV, there was *I Love Lucy* and *Dragnet* and *The Honeymooners*. Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" was playing on the radio. It was a cool time to be a young person. It seemed like the whole country was changing.

Compared to us, Lou and her ex-husband seemed rich. His full name was Cleon Morgan Cox, which sounds like a rich guy's name. He was a contractor who sometimes worked as a carpenter. He'd been married to Lou for fourteen years before they divorced. The family gossip said that he was drunk.

The house they'd lived in, at 376 Hawthorne in Los Altos, was a nice, modest, ranch-style place, white and yellow, with a big pepper tree in the backyard and a couple of pine trees, and bordered by an old-fashioned split-rail redwood fence in the front. Red Cox had bought it in 1953. It was on a quiet, shady street a few blocks away from Hillview Elementary, where my dad taught and where I would go to school. It was about three-quarters of a mile from the little stretch of "downtown" Los Altos.

With all of us living in it together, the two-bedroom house on Hawthorne was crowded. The four boys—me and Brian, Cleon and George—shared a single bedroom outfitted with two sets of bunk beds. My dad and Lou had the other bedroom, down a hallway that was "restricted." We were not allowed to go down there, into their hallway, their bathroom, or their bedroom.

The house was cramped, but it was fun. I liked having stepbrothers. Cleon, who was known as Binky, was about five years older than me, but George was just a few months older than me. I liked having a kid around who was my own age. George and I spent a lot of time playing outside, in the sandbox behind the house, or climbing that big pepper tree. My father liked to barbecue, so we had cookouts whenever the weather was warm enough.

My father also liked to build things. He always had a project going. He'd pick up lumber from the street, or from construction sites, and store it at home. One summer he built a homemade swimming pool in the front yard. He had bought these army surplus tents, made of heavy canvas, and figured out a way to stitch them together. Then he built a kind of platform around them, and filled the stitched-together tents with water.

It was leaky, and it was messy, and it was kind of funky, but it was a swimming pool. That was terrific. I have pictures of me and George and Brian, suntanned and wet, splashing around and having a great time. We had swimming races, competing to see who could run and jump in and swim the most circles around the pool without coming up for air. There's even a picture of Grandma Boo getting in the act, standing in this funny homemade swimming pool wearing a flowered bathing suit and a bathing cap, smiling into the camera.

To solve the overcrowding problem, my dad also built an addition to the back of the house on Hawthorne. That became Cleon's bedroom, so it was just me and Brian and George sharing a room.

Leaving the cramped house with Grandma Boo for a new house with a new mom and new stepbrothers was a big change. So was moving from San Jose to Los Altos. Socially, that was a giant change.

I already knew about Los Altos. Everybody knew about Los Altos. It was like the Beverly Hills of San Jose. It was an uptight, upper-middle-class, or even upper-class, community. This was where the doctors and lawyers lived, where the wealthy people lived. The houses in Los Altos were larger and statelier than anyplace I'd ever lived, and you never saw so many Lincolns and Cadillacs, and foreign cars. It seemed exotic. It was green and leafy. The roads were lined with redwood trees, pepper trees, and oaks. The sidewalks and backyards were shaded by fruit trees, too. I especially liked apricots. You could pick your lunch on the way to school and eat your fill.

The little strip of downtown was like something out of a story-book. The main drag was filled with attractive little shops. There was a five-and-dime store in the center of the block called Sprouse Ritter. The supermarket where we did our grocery shopping, Whitecliff Market, was just around the corner. Down the street was Clint's, an ice cream parlor with a giant ice cream cone on the roof. At the end of that block was a quaint one-story shopping center, where the buildings were all made of dark-stained redwood. The parking lot was always full of nice-looking cars—especially those wood-paneled station wagons that rich suburban housewives used to drive.

We could never have afforded to live there on our own. I'm not sure my dad could have afforded to own his own home even in San Jose. For sure he couldn't have bought a house in Los Altos, not on an elementary school teacher's salary. (My dad told me he was hired there at a starting salary of \$4,000 per year.) So it must have been the fact that Lou already owned the house on Hawthorne that made

possible for us to live in Los Altos.

This might have grated on my dad. He was a proud man, and this was the 1950s. Women weren't supposed to be the breadwinners, and they weren't supposed to hold the purse strings, or the deed to the ranch.

It also might have given my dad an extra reason to work extra hard. Because he started working very hard. Every day he went to teach at Hillview, just like he had been doing. But now that he was a two-family man he took a second job working as a motion-picture processor on the swing shift at an Eastman Kodak production facility in Palo Alto. He'd come home from teaching, eat something, then change his clothes and go out again. He'd work from six to midnight, when the graveyard shift started, then he'd come home and sleep and get up and teach again.

But that wasn't enough. I don't know if he needed extra money, or felt he needed to pull his own weight, or just wanted a reason to be out of the crowded house and away from all those kids. Whatever it was, he took a third job. He started working on weekday afternoons and all day Saturday and Sunday as a checker at Whitecliff Market. During the week, he'd leave school, go to Whitecliff, work a few hours, come home and grab a quick bite, then go to Kodak for his swing shift.

That wasn't enough, either. He got a *fourth* job. He signed on as a crossing guard, before school and after school. He'd leave the house early in the morning and stand out there with another Hillview teacher, raising and lowering this big sign so the kids could get across the street. He'd leave school and do it again after classes ended, then go to Whitecliff, then come home to change, then go to Eastman Kodak.

I'm not sure how long he did that, but after a while that still wasn't enough. He enlisted in the National Guard, and began taking military classes and undergoing training on the weekends.

The obsession with work was a lifelong thing with my dad. My uncle Kenny told me that when he and my dad were in high school, and living in that logging camp in Ryderwood, Washington, my dad was the same way. There were fifty kids in their high school, and there were three part-time jobs available for the high school boys. "Rod had all three of them," Kenny said. "He was the janitor, he swept up in the pool hall, and he worked in the meat market at the company store."

Somehow he also found time to continue his education, too. He studied part-time at Stanford on the nights he wasn't working and on the weekends that he wasn't doing his National Guard service.

We didn't see much of him. When he was home at all, he'd come in tired and sit down in front of the TV with a beer and a little snack and fall straight to sleep. Me and the other kids got yelled at if we made noise. Dad's sleep was the most important thing, whether he was taking a nap in his room or snoring in his easy chair. We'd get in real trouble if we woke him up.

I got in trouble all the time.

Lou was a stern stepmother, and she ran a tight ship. She kept a clean house. I've never lived in such a clean house. I *liked* living in a clean house, but with Lou it was a kind of mania.

For example, not long after we moved in with her, she started inspecting and then wiping my butt. ~~She'd make me take down my pants and underpants, and bend me over. If she didn't like what she saw, she'd take a washcloth and wipe me—while complaining about how dirty I was.~~

She did this with my brother Brian, too. And maybe with him it made sense. He was old enough to wipe himself, but he was only four, and he hadn't had a mother around for most of his life, so maybe he wasn't doing such a good job of it. But I was seven years old! I didn't need anyone to wipe my butt. It was traumatic for me. It was humiliating to have someone make me bend over and take my pants down. I hated it.

Lou was a good cook. She made pork chops with mashed potatoes and homemade gravy. She baked turkeys, and roast beef, and she cooked liver. She was big on salads and vegetables, which I didn't like at all. She made cornbread and homemade soups. I never knew her to use anything canned or powdered or packaged. She made good homemade cakes, even though I didn't like the way she did her icing—it wasn't that creamy, gooey kind that I liked. One of her famous dishes was Italian Delight. She'd take whatever was left over in the fridge and put it together with Italian sauce and spices and serve it over spaghetti. This was Lou's Friday night special.

But she was also very strict. She had rules about everything—you'd better do this, and you'd better *not* do that—and she always knew if you broke them. She could tell, even if you were at the other end of the house, whether you'd washed your hands before dinner. If you hadn't, you might get sent to your room.

You could get punished for yelling, for fighting, for coming home late from school, for not doing your homework, for losing your homework, for getting your school clothes dirty, for talking back, for not having proper table manners, and for any number of other things. Lou made everyone say “yes, ma'am” and “no, ma'am.” She made everyone say “please” and “thank you.” If you forgot, you got in trouble for that, too.

If you didn't behave, you either got sent to your room or you got spanked. Being sent to your room wasn't so bad. I didn't like being left out of the games, or being separated from my brothers, but I could do things in my room with my imagination. I could invent things. I had plastic cowboys and Indians, and army men, and I could make up stuff by myself.

The problem was the house was so small and cramped. If it was nighttime or a rainy day, and the other boys weren't playing outside, I couldn't be punished by being sent to my room—because we all shared a room. So, a lot of the time, I got spanked.

To be honest, I deserved some kind of punishment. I was a troublemaker. I'd get restless or bored and I'd start to misbehave.

For example, I liked scaring people. I would hide behind a door or behind the sofa and wait for someone to walk into the room. Then, when they were real close, I'd jump out and scream. I loved getting a reaction. Mostly I did it to George or Brian. Especially Brian.

I also liked to attack Brian, or attack his stuff. I'd watch him carefully build a castle out of blocks

I'd watch him make the walls and the tower, and maybe put a bridge over his imaginary moat. I'd wait until he had everything perfect. Then I'd come swooping down like an invading horde. I was Attila the Hun. I was Genghis Khan. I'd descend on his unprotected castle and demolish it. I thought this was the funniest thing in the world. I'd storm in, attack him, and then storm out again, laughing my head off while he cried about his ruined castle.

It never occurred to me that I was hurting him, or even upsetting him. I just thought the idea of being so hysterical. That moment of surprise was so much fun that I never really thought about how I felt to be on the other end of it. So I got in trouble.

I also got in trouble at Lou's house for eating when I wasn't supposed to eat. She was very strict about food, just like she was strict about all the rules in that house. Meals were for mealtime. There was no snacking. If you were hungry, you went hungry and you waited until dinner.

I couldn't wait. I was a big kid. I was growing fast. I was hungry all the time. So I'd go into the kitchen and grab something to eat. Usually it was fruit. I particularly liked bananas. I'd take the banana and go up to my room and eat it there.

It wasn't just at home. I was hungry everywhere I went, and I learned to sneak or steal food. In the first grade at Hillview Elementary, I got caught committing my very first crime. I was hungry, as usual, and I was alone in the cloakroom, and I realized I was surrounded by other kids' lunch boxes. So I opened one and found some cherries and started chowing down. I got caught red-handed—literally, with cherry juice still on my fingers—and was punished. When I got home and told Lou what had happened, I got punished again, with a spanking.

Sometimes I got punished for things I shouldn't have been punished for at all. For example, I got punished for taking those bananas. Like I said, Lou ran a tight ship. If a banana was missing, she knew it. I don't think she actually counted the bananas, but there was the problem of getting rid of the evidence. You couldn't hide a banana peel from her. She kept such a clean house that she'd find it no matter where you put it—in the trash, under the bed, wherever—and you'd get punished for stealing a banana. Imagine spanking a kid for taking food from his own house when he was hungry. But that's what happened, more times than I can remember.

So, between one thing and another, I got spanked a *lot*. When I was little, this was usually a pants-down, over-the-knee spanking. Lou would deliver some pretty sharp smacks, with her hand or with a wooden spoon, and give me a lecture. It was painful, and it was embarrassing.

With my dad, it was much more serious. When it was his turn to do the spanking, he didn't fool around. After he'd come home from work, Lou would take him aside and tell him what I had done. Sometimes she told him the truth. Sometimes she exaggerated or made things up. Sometimes she blamed me for things the other boys did. Either way, my dad would punish me for it. He never asked me if it was true. He never asked me for my side of the story. He'd just say, "Howard!" and then take me outside.

With my dad, I got spanked with a piece of wood. I had to choose the piece of wood myself. That was tricky. If I chose a thick piece, it was going to hurt. But if I chose a thin piece and it broke, he

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