



Bryan J. Fica, BA

# OCD: NO JOKE

my extreme 50-year journey or...  
how to wash your life away in six decades or less

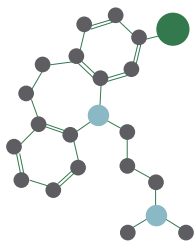


foreword by Dr. Ronald Ballenger, Ph.D. Clinical Psychologist

BRYAN J. FICA, BA

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How to wash your life away in six decades or less.



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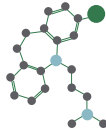
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*Courtesy of Google*  
*"If you're going through Hell, keep going"*  
*- quote attributed to Winston Churchill*



Courtesy of MetaMediaNews



## FOREWARD

by Ronald G. Ballenger, Ph.D.  
Clinical Psychologist

**T**his is a story of an odyssey across Europe and the Middle East over a long period of time to escape a sepulcher, not of concrete or marble, but created by the mind. An odyssey that will not end on arrival to one's native country, but will continue despite arriving.

This is a sepulcher that lies in one's mind as a paralyzing fear of psychological contamination. Places that are once contaminated cannot be revisited, ever, without terror, both physical and psychological.

There is no escape.

This story speaks of a childhood lived with truly incompetent and even toxic adults. Adults who exhibited inconsistency, coldness, uncertainty, dishonesty, as well as seething, overwrought negativity towards one another as well as the children.

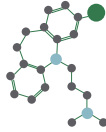
The lack of loving attachment within a family cast a penumbra of darkness and rejection over its members including the children. The seeds of these early experiences were planted deeply where they grew with malignance. The result of this combination of nurture and nature was Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

Something was very wrong with these parental attachments. There was an entanglement from which no escape was or is possible. This is a story of survival after a lifelong struggle with a debilitating mental health disability.

This story also raises hope that one can find ways to manage one's life, even if there is no acceptable pathway available to curing the disability.



*Courtesy of Google  
Howard Hughes*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

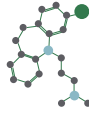
**T**hank you to Dr. Ron Ballenger, Dr. Beatrice Breitling, and over five dozen other mental health care professionals that I have seen in seven countries.

OCD is a condition, which has been recognized in the lives of Shakespeare's [Lady McBeth], Darwin, Saddam Hussein, Howard Hughes, Heath White, cousins Peter and Thomas Stukalo, soccer aces Paul Gascoigne and David Beckham, entertainers Michael Jackson, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jane Horrocks, Winona Ryder, Harrison Ford, Woody Allen, Jane and Billy Bob Thorton, Elizabeth Taylor and Larry Fortensky, Jeffery Dahmer, Bill Murray, Steve Martin, and of course Jack Nicholson, and Tony Shalhoub.

Special thanks to my very good friends around the world: Chris and her mom, Anne, Ron and Judy, Fred, Clyde, Al and Erika, Lee, Clem, Jennifer, Bernie, and Walt.

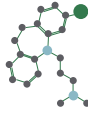
I would like to especially thank Jennifer Reynolds, Clyde Rollins, Colin Blackburn, and Dr. Ronald Ballenger who helped by advising me, designing, and editing my book.





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## WHAT CAUSES OCD?



3 MAIN RISK FACTORS THAT CAN CAUSE OCD TYPES

**GENETICS**  
People with 1st degree relatives who developed OCD as a child or teen, significantly higher risk of developing OCD

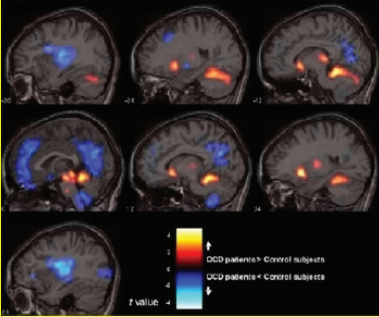
**BRAIN STRUCTURE**  
Research suggests that specific areas of the brain can be identified as being affected

**ENVIRONMENT**  
Experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional abuse at a young age

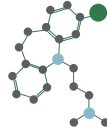
*Courtesy of Northpoint Recovery*

## How OCD affects the Brain

- OCD is thought to involve a problem with brain functioning.
- Serotonin levels in people with OCD is unbalanced, causing them to get stuck in routine, and not able to break the cycle.
- Certain parts of the brain also become overactive.



*Courtesy of Google*



## INTRODUCTION

*“If you wish to know the mind of a man, listen to his words.”*

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

I make no joke about my devastating illness, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. OCD is my most feared three-letter combination assembled from the entire alphabet. I have lived with this disorder for six decades now since the age of 13.

I disagree with the medical term “*disorder*,” it is the need to order and to have perfection and symmetry in my everyday life that allows the medical community to make their tens of billions of dollars worldwide without a cure.

### **This struggle to get Super Clean is my chaos of the mind.**

If lifelong coping skills are not mandated into one’s daily normal routine, this lifelong WAR can and will get out of hand. It has and will destroy self-esteem, relationships, friendships, marriages, careers, and yes, even oneself.

How can this become an everyday manageable battle?

As an OCD sufferer, I prefer the term “survivor.” I am sharing with you, the reader, researcher, medical professional, and student, insights into my behaviour from a patient’s and sufferer’s perspective over the past six decades.

Suicide was not the solution, but at times, the only answer.

Centuries ago, the world perceived us humans with mental illnesses as demons and devils. There is still a large amount of stigma attached in society and the workplace.

When we think of a disorder, we think of disarray and confusion. To a non-sufferer, it might seem that way; but to me, a participant that survives with this ground zero contamination of the mind, the second by

second, minute by minute, hour by hour, day to day, week by month by year by decade existence is all encompassing. There is no escape. I must have my world Super Clean even with no one city to hide in or no one country to run to.

What the world is experiencing with the Coronavirus pandemic has been ingrained in my mind and behaviour since the early 1970s. I avoided people, telephones, handling money, opening doors, and picking any items up from the contaminated floor or ground.

### **I had to find a way to keep Super Clean no matter what cleaning rituals had already been done.**

I have lived in 89 apartments and houses in seven countries as of April 2023. In Germany, I resided three times and in Italy twice. I have also travelled through 31 lands. Throughout all these lands, I could not escape my severe OCD. It was a demon haunting me wherever I went.

The contaminants of my mind are rapid thoughts that grasp my throat and entire body. When I feel psychologically dirty, it chokes the life out of my soul. It is anxiety at its highest level. No matter where in the world I have lived, I could not escape the anxiety and fear of being contaminated or of items being contaminated. My illness plays over and over and over again constantly.

Anxiety is a worldwide epidemic costing hundreds of billions of dollars a year in added stress, lost work hours, and sleep. Often, it is a hidden misery.

Every book, article, website, and webinar I have ever read and researched over the past couple of decades offers a clinical analysis of this spectrum disorder. A spectrum disorder is a mental disorder that affects the prefrontal cortex. These related disorders include a range of linked conditions that share symptoms and traits.

Other spectrum disorders include anorexia, autism, bulimia, depression, manic depression disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD], attention-deficit disorder [ADD], oppositional defiant disorder [ODD], obesity, sleep disorders, and addictions such as alcoholism, gambling, drugs, and sex disorders.<sup>1</sup>

In Chapter 3 of Dr. Daniel G. Amen's book, *Change Your Brain Change Your Life*<sup>2</sup>, he describes how problems in one's Deep Limbic System affect all spectrum disorders.

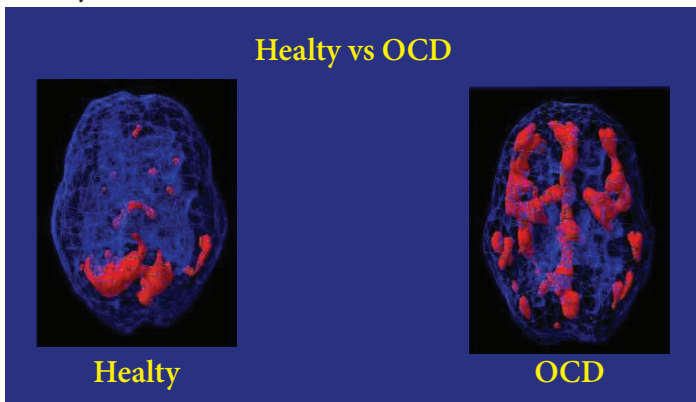
In the prefrontal cortex lobes, the sufferers' neurotransmitters have a

hard time functioning in the brain. That area is responsible for focus, forethought, judgment, and impulse control. When a healthy person thinks a thought it goes from A, to B, to C, then D and so on. In my brain, it's D to P, J to R, F to M. That is why I get stuck doing tasks. I must repeat them over and over again.

On October 2012, I finally left Turkey after living there for five years. I stayed at my skiing buddy's place in Reston, Virginia. As luck would have it, the Amen Clinic was only five kilometres away. I paid \$4,300 U.S. for a Single-Photon Emission Computed Tomography [SPECT] scan done.<sup>3</sup>

### **OCD has a neurobiological basis.**

This nuclear medicine tomographic imaging technique uses gamma rays on the brain. A radioactive substance and a special camera are used to create 3-D pictures. A SPECT scan produces images that show how your organs work. For instance, a SPECT scan can show how blood flows to your heart or what areas of your brain are more active or less active<sup>4</sup>. An OCD brain does not function properly and has a pattern of increased blood flow to the anterior cingulate gyrus and the basal ganglia areas of the brain. The anterior cingulate gyrus regulates attention. In a healthy brain, one's thoughts can change to another. When the brain is overactive, people get stuck on thoughts or behaviours. The basil ganglia help control the body's idle or anxiety levels. Increased anxiety is associated with hyperactivity in the cortico-striato-thalamo-cortical [CSTC] circuit. Small scale neuroimaging studies have shown that treatment of OCD is associated with reduced activity across different brain structures within this circuitry<sup>5</sup>.

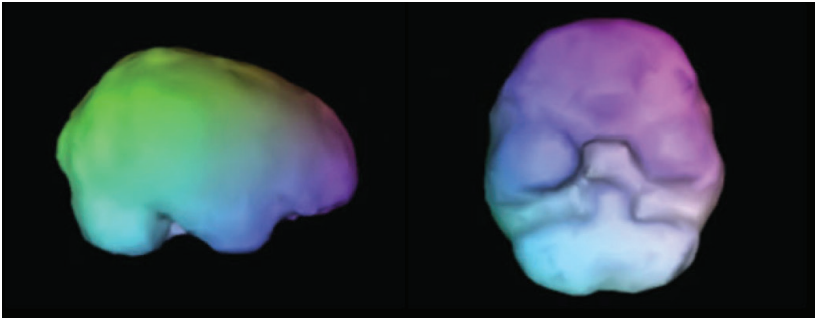


*Courtesy of Technology Networks*  
SPECT scan of a healthy brain versus an OCD brain.

Scientists and researchers around the world are not 100 percent certain how this increased blood flow exactly affects OCD or addictions. The increased blood flow increases or decreases the normal functioning of the neurons firing.

Healthy SPECT surface right side

Healthy SPECT surface underside

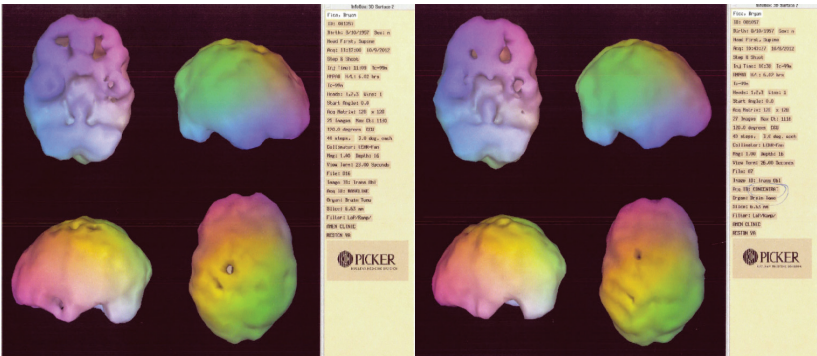


Courtesy of Dr. Amen Clinics

SPECT scan of a healthy brain.  
Notice how smooth the surface of the brain is.

My brain resting

My brain concentrating



October 2012 - my SPECT brain scans

Courtesy of Dr. Amen Clinics, Reston, Virginia

Notice how there are many holes and not smooth.

The connection between rituals and anxiety is based on the individual's anxiety severity. A five-minute a day teeth brushing routine twice a day is not stressful. It's when the anxiety becomes uncontrollable that time consuming rituals need to be done to cope. The performing of rituals relieves the anxiety.

Everyone has a different level of anxiety threshold. The war in Ukraine

will have a lasting effect on millions of people. Some Ukrainians will cope as if there was no war. While other Ukrainians will have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] or other disorders their entire lives.

In my case, it was a series of damaging events within an imbalanced family environment that I could not cope with that caused my anxiety.

Simply stated, there is a drastic event or events that cause uncontrollable anxiety that the individual cannot deal with. Their psyche then adapts by starting an anxiety disorder to relieve their fear.

It's never just one drink that makes a person an alcoholic.

My Iranian OCD friend, Essie, whom I met in Adana southern Turkey in 2007, currently brushes his teeth 10 times a day. He has descended into a trap where he must brush his teeth to relieve anxiety. But at the same, time this ritual causes anxiety due to the time taken and other daily tasks not completed. This results in increased blood flow in the brain. The increased blood flow concentrating with their ritual could be a disaster in an OCD person's daily comfort level.

The late Dr. Joseph Annibali was the chief psychiatrist that analyzed my two days of tests. My SPECT scan showed that I had suffered a severe concussion. The test could not tell me when the concussion had occurred.

I told Dr. Annibali that at the age of three, my godfather threw me up in the air and forgot to catch me. My left collarbone was broken and my dad, who was a chiropractor, x-rayed me before going to the hospital. Could this single event have changed my entire life?

When I was eight, I began judo which I took for several years reaching my green belt. I was also about eight when I ran headfirst into a brick wall by accident. I started to ski when I was three. He said, "Did you wear a helmet?" I said, "No one in the 1960s wore a helmet." Then when I was 11 years old, I was goofing around with my uncle that was babysitting me. I toppled over like a tree and broke my left collarbone again in the same place. I might have had a concussion. Dad once again took an x-ray, and we went a few blocks away to the St. Joseph's Hospital in Toronto to have it set.

So, I am not making light of the countless researchers' and doctors' daily efforts to assist us around the world.

But I hope that parts of my book lets us laugh about this dreaded disorder. Even the sufferer can re-think humorous times in one's own life, take the time and laugh about it. As I have always said, "If it doesn't kill you, it can only make you stronger." I always used humour to deal with my severe



disorder even though it took me hours to do a normal daily task.

So, let us open up to the funnier side of being human. Severe OCD is often associated with depression, which I never experienced. Sure, I get down and frustrated with my OCD world, but never clinically depressed. My mom told me many times when I was an adult, “Some people have it way harder than you.”

To date, the brightest, most analytical scientists, psychiatrists, and psychologists in the world still don't have a cure, nor do they agree on the cause of this behavior.

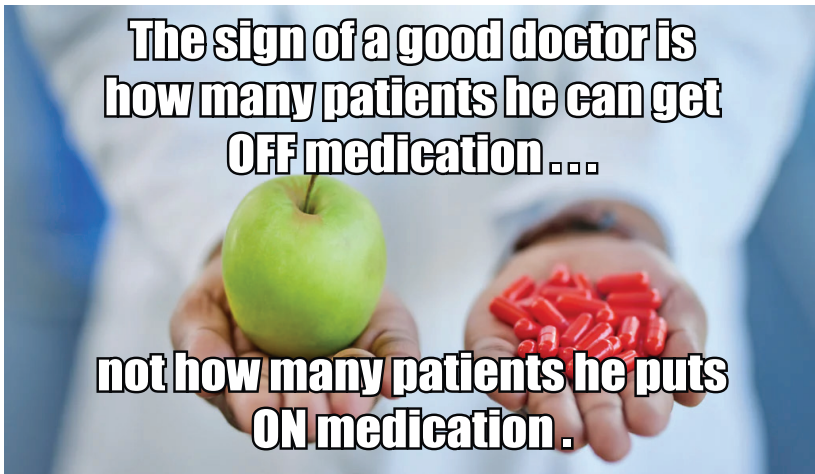
Since the first drug store was opened in Baghdad in 754<sup>6</sup>, tablets upon tablets have been pushed over the counter offering little, if any, support in battling this enemy of the mind.

### **There is no magic pill.**

Some people have mild OCD or habits. Some people have medium OCD or strong habits. I have severe OCD.

The pharmaceutical companies spend tens of billions of dollars concocting new pills only in the hope of making hundreds of billions more. There is more of a profit in medicating than in curing the big ticket diseases around the world.

The masses of the world will spend more money being guinea pigs testing and taking medications in the next quarter century than in the entire past 2,000 years. In a perfect world, no medication at all would be the ideal world health goal to reach for all mental health patients.



If there was a cure for anxiety tomorrow, what would the medical industries do? Millions of mind-altering doctors, therapists, hypnotists, and social workers around the globe would be unemployed.

The world has learned due to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome [SARS] in 2003, H1N1 in 2009, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome [MERS] in 2012, Ebola in 2014, and now the Coronavirus COVID-19 in 2019, what it feels like having my second by second anxiety of germs.

OCD is a disorder that has a neurobiological basis. It equally affects men, women, and children of all races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The percentage of Canadians with OCD is .93%<sup>vii</sup>. In the U.S., about one in 40 adults and one in 100 children have OCD<sup>viii</sup>. According to the World Health Organization [WHO], OCD is one of the top 20 causes of illness-related disabilities worldwide for individuals between 15 and 44 years of age.

OCD is an underfunded disorder because it is not common. Cancers are primary diseases. Hundreds of billions go into research and cancer cures every year. Conditions like baldness, gout, or psoriasis, I feel, are secondary ailments with less money and research spent annually.

Depression is ranked by WHO as the single largest contributor to global disability [7.5% of all years lived with disability in 2015]; anxiety disorders are ranked 6<sup>th</sup> [3.4%].

The proportion of the global population with anxiety disorders in 2015 is estimated to be 3.6% or 264 million people. These cases are not evenly distributed around the world. African Region: 20%, Eastern Mediterranean Region: 10%, European Region: 14%, Region of the Americas: 21%, South-East Asia Region: 23%, and Western Pacific Region: 20%. This reflects a 14.9% increase since 2005, are a result of population growth and aging. Anxiety disorders led to a global total of 24.6 million YLD [Years Lived with Disability] in 2015.

The global organization, “WeThe15,” is an excellent resource, which caters to 15% of the global population who is disabled. Over 1.2 billion or one out of seven people on this planet has a disability<sup>ix</sup>.

When the 1997 Oscar award-winning movie, *As Good As It Gets*, was released, this phobic lifestyle become mainstream. Three hundred years ago, I would have been taken to the dungeons of Europe and locked away forever.

The detective TV show, *Monk*, portrayed a functional person with odd characteristics and obsessive cleaning rituals. Three primetime Emmys for Outstanding Lead Actor were awarded to Tony Shalhoub,

who plays San Francisco detective, Adrian Monk. He does a brilliant job creating this OCD inflicted character. When my mom first heard about the show she was taken aback, since it made fun of my illness. The writers made sure that the viewers received a good laugh from the predicaments that Monk was stuck in. It is one of my favourite shows.

### **Sixty years ago, I would have been hospitalized in a sanitarium for life with my disorder.**

Society still has not fully accepted the mentally ill. Living in seven countries, two countries multiple times, has made me aware of the plight humans go through to keep the status quo and be accepted as normal. When I lived in Turkey 2007 to 2012, psychological therapy was still not totally accepted by society. Only the family knew about a person's weekly appointments. When I was in OCD in-patient therapy for seven and a half weeks in Britain during the summer of 1998, there was still a stigma placed on mental illnesses. In North America, it's very common the past decades to go see a therapist.

Yes, there is nothing wrong in going to a capable professional to sort out anxieties, but to offer tens of millions of children Ritalin like Smarties is a sad example of our times. Why, would Novartis, Pfizer, and Bayer concentrate on curing uncommon illnesses when they can make the real obscene money, attempting to cure all cancers, the common cold, or COVID-19? Scientists and researchers around the world have never understood the dynamics of how the brain works. All the dozens of medications that I have taken since 1993 have been the by-products of doing testing for other human faults, mainly depression.

Anxiety should be the prime focus point among our researchers. Even though it is invisible, its cost to a human being is staggering. Isolation, hours of cleaning per day, avoidance, severing ties with family and friends are a tragic reward to maintain cleanliness.

My family and friends for years have laughed and been amazed at most of my Great Escape stories - my stories of human survival, avoiding, or dealing with my Contaminated World. Some are embarrassingly painful to talk about, but most are incredible, demonstrating my ingenuity in escaping from my mind's prison.

In the seven countries I have lived in, I have met OCD survivors from all walks of life, all religions, and social-economic levels, and all ages. I have watched individuals of dozens of different ethnicities try to accomplish their tasks to live another day. Whether it was an American, Canadian, German, Iranian, Spaniard, Italian, Polish, Columbian, Korean, Japanese,

or British, the individual attempts have the same outcome, that is to always relieve the obsession by getting Super Clean. We are all trying to eradicate the fear and the anxiety to live free another day.

If you observe 100 OCD patients, there will be 100 different OCD mannerisms.

### Common Compulsions in Young People

washing

repeating

checking

touching

counting

ordering/arranging/tidying/“evening-up”

hoarding

praying

Source: March J, Mulle K: OCD in children and adolescents:  
A cognitive-behavioral treatment manual. New York: Guilford Press 1998<sup>xi</sup>

### Common Obsessions in Young People

fears about dirt or contamination

worrying about harm coming to yourself or others

feeling angry or violent towards others for no reason

unwanted sexual thoughts

worrying about religion or morality

thoughts about doing something embarrassing or forbidden

worrying about “evening-up” or if things are symmetrical

needing to tell, ask or confess

Source: March J, Mulle K: OCD in children and adolescents:  
A cognitive-behavioral treatment manual. New York: Guilford Press, 1998<sup>xi</sup>

The professionals call us sufferers. Heck no, we are survivors!!!

We battle our genetic and learned patterns or die. This illness, which no one can cure, has no boundaries. The medical profession tells us to use these meds or use these behavior modification methods to cope.

### **Coping is nothing but a dirty word for me.**

I haven't been out of my apartment SUPER CLEAN since February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, to July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. It was so good to finally get out and get my first COVID-19 shot, go to the dentist, and shop at the hardware and drug stores. Even though it takes me four hours to clean, shower, and dress, I now get out of my apartment Super Clean once a week. Every therapist I have seen has always told me I need to learn to "cope" with my OCD. Well, that's 17 months and 23 days of being socially self-isolated, not because of COVID, but because of my severe OCD. Coping with my severe disorder has been challenging for six decades now.

I have been in therapy on and off for 30 years now and on over two dozen different types of medications with no cure in sight. I've tried everything under the sun. This is so frustrating living in my OCD world. The side effects with my libido not functioning are disastrous. Most severe mental health patients go through the same scenario.

The psychology and psychiatry professions are some of the few professions in the world where there is no guarantee of success.

Show me an OCD cure! I want and deserve an OCD cure!

I truly thank all those five dozen practitioners in seven countries that have offered me insight into my mind and kept me alive for another exciting day.

Many people have asked me what is this thing I have called OCD?

Let me use this analogy. If you were to defecate and smear your feces all over your face, arms, and body, and walk around all day, how would you feel? That is how I feel 24/7, second by second, hour to hour, week to week, month to years to decades later.

I am now in my sixth decade of this excruciating minute by minute contamination feeling.

I have a three-page letter written Monday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017, from Dr. Patrick Lynch, Clinical Coordinator from the Calgary Foothills Hospital Anxiety Unit that states, "As for the severity of his OCD, Mr. Fica has one of the most severe cases I have ever seen in my 36 years of experience

as a psychologist specializing in the treatment of anxiety disorders.”

Psychologists have asked me what colour, shape, and texture is my severe OCD. I tell them, “It is a glistening black amoeba that changes its shape covering all the contaminated objects in my apartment and around some parts of the world I’ve visited.”

There is no escape for me.

When I lived in Incirlik, South Turkey, I did not bathe or shower for 86 days. I didn’t brush or floss my teeth, comb my hair, or shower for almost three months. I washed my hands daily for over thirty minutes. I didn’t groom my body or use deodorant or wear clean clothes. I was so stressed out with life that I did not have the mental strength to brush my teeth or shower. Five devastating occurrences happened to me from the winter of 2011 to June 2013. My father deceived me. I lost \$100,000 U.S. in an investment, and I was a financial planner with 29 years of experience. My OCD got so severe I could not see clients anymore, so I resigned after a career of 27 years on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012. My mom died on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012, at the age of 77. My grandmother, Big Baba, died June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, at the age of 100 years, six months. All this while living in southern Turkey and having my close friends in Germany and the U.S.A., I could not handle these earth-shattering events alone. The way I dealt with all the added anxiety was to take long showers and clean my belongings to get SUPER CLEAN and perfect. It was and still is a chore for me to shower. I must do these showering rituals to get SUPER CLEAN. I hate to do the rituals, but I am so relieved when I can get out of the shower SUPER CLEAN and have a normal day. For decades, it took me over three hours to leave the house SUPER CLEAN.

It’s like stressing for weeks preparing to write an exam in high school or university. You are so relieved after it is all over, but it almost killed you to prepare for it. Same with me every day of my life before a shower.

In Turkey, I spent 678 days, 22 months socially self-isolated in my apartment without going downstairs and out on the streets meeting the world. I never showered for 86 days. Please stop taking a bath or shower for one week, or a month, or 86 days. How would you feel?

OCD is destructive. It is an obsession, a thought, which must be eliminated through a compulsion, an action. It’s like a gerbil on a spinning wheel in its cage. It’s never ending.

The thought of not being Super Clean is my key driving force. Other than breathing and eating, this is the strongest drive that I unfortunately have. I’d rather die than be contaminated.

## **What is it like for me to be Super Clean?**

The moment I step out of a shower is the moment that I have coined Super Clean. All the bacteria, the grime, the sweat has disappeared down the shower drain. It's like a rebirth. The OCD demon in me has vanished, but for how long?

For many people in the world, their obsession is money, power, alcohol, religion, sex, drugs, food, or gambling. The fear that controls their obsession could be poverty, insecurity, a corporate or poor family image. There has never been a person that has ever lived that can say, "I have not feared something." That something usually is irrational and unexplained. It's the irrationality that causes stress among families, in relationships, and in individuals.

It is normal to have unwanted or unpleasant thoughts. They pass quickly and are not stuck in our heads. OCD people have thoughts that become uncontrollable obsessions and become stuck in their heads. There are several themes associated with this behaviour. They are germs and contamination, symmetry, aggressive impulses, fear of harming or killing others, religion, or sexual imaginativeness.

This is my journey I share with you. The life of an Obsessive Compulsive survivor. If you do not want to read about cleaning, avoidance, contamination, perfectionism, or fear, then read another book, for you cannot ask the alcoholic their story without listening to all the booze consumed. You cannot hear the anorexic's or bulimic's life without hearing the thousands of times of self-abuse, the drug addict's highs, or the gambler's lows.

## **I offer insight into my unique life.**

I have seen sights, cities, mountains, and bodies of water in 31 countries that most people only dream and read about. I've climbed and skied at some of the top ski areas of the world, and scuba dove where Cleopatra bathed in South Turkey 2,000 years ago. I accomplished my bucket list even with my severe disability.

The difference in my life is that I had to avoid the contaminated parts of a room, apartment, street, city, or country to breathe and live. I didn't want to go on a government monthly disability as an 18-year-old without accomplishing something in my life. I received my college diploma and my university degree in Toronto. I've done sports since the age of four. I took part in judo, karate, volleyball, tennis, badminton, squash, skiing, scuba diving, cycling the Alps, 10-kilometre road running races, and rock

climbing around the world. I've run four marathons: two in under three hours.

After 18 months of being a Canadian financial planner in Moncton, New Brunswick, I moved to Germany. I studied for my Wall Street securities exam and became a successful U.S. financial planner living overseas for 27 years working with the U.S. Military and Department of Defense personnel in Europe and the Middle East.

To cope with the impact of my severe OCD on my lifestyle, I have done dangerous and damaging feats. I've jumped from a moving contaminated German train cabin to the Super Clean ground below. I've gone scuba diving in the German Alps down to 51 metres/167 feet to get even more SUPER CLEAN. I've thrown out over \$100,000 U.S. of my clothes and belongings.

### **Unfortunately, I've severed relationships with hundreds of people and my family.**

This book is intended not as a medical text or as a cure for the individual, but to offer some insight and laughs from My World. I'm offering to the professional, the public, the OCD sufferer, and to the COVID-19 world the serious and sometimes comical side of this ailment. Most of the world is avoiding touching many objects like door handles and are fastidious in their cleaning now with the global pandemic.

I have two chapters devoted to the researchers, professors, and students of mental illness and what it takes me to get into the shower and get Super Clean. This is a factual portrayal of anxiety at its highest level!

Hopefully, it will be educational and therapeutic to anyone who has known a person or animal with these patterns. The discussion across this planet about mental health needs to be destigmatized.

You see, I'm a world expert in the survival of OCD. My story is how I have coped with severe OCD and how I have lived my honest and exciting life.

The invisible rabbit called Harvey hasn't killed me yet. The five-dozen therapists and doctors I've seen, the seven and a half weeks of inpatient treatment at the famous University of London, England [Bethlem Royal Hospital - Maudsley Clinic], the over 25 different medications, are all proof that "OCD is NOOO JOKE."

Like my grandfather always said, "Half the world is crying, and half the world is smiling. Which side do you want to be on?"



Have a laugh, a cry, a read, and make fun of life in order to survive it...  
And please remember to...

**“Wash your hands . . .  
wash your hands . . .  
and wash your hands.”**

So, “Bust the Moose,” I will see you in the shower, two metres apart.

**Bryan J. Fica, BA “Bust the Moose...”<sup>1</sup>**



*Courtesy of Google*

*“It’s not what you accomplish in life that is important, it’s what  
you’ve overcome in it.”*

*- Tiger Woods*

<sup>1</sup>I came up with the term “Bust the Moose” in the late 1980s when playing sports. Instead of saying “Bust your Ass” around my U.S. clients, which was inappropriate, I used “Bust The Moose.” Giving 100 percent effort without being vulgar. Plus, Canada has more moose than any country in the world. So, I kept a bit of Canadian in me while living overseas.



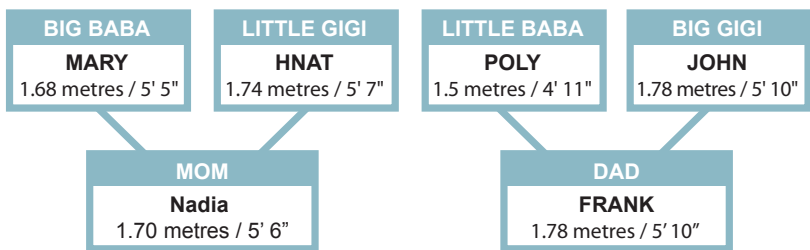
## CHAPTER ONE

### FAMILY BACKGROUND GROUND ZERO

Families are a funny thing you know. Every family has a crazy Uncle Harry or a bizarre Aunt Sue. Unfortunately, with families, you can't pick them, they pick you. I always said, "I was born with the wrong parents. You choose your friends but you can't choose your family."

On my dad's side, it was Little Baba [Polly] and Big Gigi [John]. On my mom's side, it was Big Baba [Mary] and Little Gigi [Hnat]. Baba and Gigi translated from Polish and Ukrainian is grandmother and grandfather. Little and big described their actual physical sizes, which I used ever since I was a kid.

Without family unity and harmony, there will always be a real struggle for children growing up without a proper role model. Don't feel sad about my family, just laugh and be grateful it's not yours.



### MY FAMILY TREE

My family's background, like most families, is dysfunctional and a little bit strange - maybe a bit stranger than most? My grandparents [Dad's side] came over from Poland in the mid-1920s and my grandparents [Mom's side] came over from Ukraine during the same time period. They were hardworking emigrants escaping the sorrows of the Bolshevik communist idealistic empire.

Big Baba was the daughter of the town's mayor in a village in Ternopil [western Ukraine], the Russian breadbasket. The family was affluent and rich, while Little Gigi, my grandfather's family members, were peasants.

A great story from Big Baba was that when she was a young teenager, she won a plot of land in a farting contest. And yes, she was actually a descendant of the Russian Romanov Czar. Good in-breeding has many sides to it.

When she fell in love with Little Gigi, as a young teenager in Ternopil, her dad, my great grandfather, was very concerned. He said, "Don't hang around and fall in love with a musician; they never make any money." Obviously, this was before the days of the '78 record, Elvis, Motown, The Beatles, Madonna, Beyoncé, and Drake, etc.

When she fell in love with Little Gigi, as a young teenager in Ternopil, her dad [my great grandfather] was very concerned. He said, "Don't hang around and fall in love with a musician; they never make any money." Obviously, this was before the days of the '78 record, Elvis, Motown, The Beatles, Madonna, and Drake, etc.

Little Gigi, my maternal grandfather, played the violin in bands in the Old Country. He enjoyed the Ukrainian folk music and the traditional classics, playing each and every day. All his life he was a frustrated musician that had reached his musical limits as a young adult. I always remember him



1963 Christmas  
- Uncle Ned, Mom and Dad, Big Baba and little Gigi, & BJ

performing with his violin when he had no customers in his barber shop. He was an excellent barber. He ruled the violin lessons given to Mom and Uncle Ned with a heavy bow. They would have to execute their lessons in the morning before school and after school daily. Little Gigi did not believe that sports was a financially viable option. So, my mom and Uncle Ned were forced into learning the violin. Little Gigi said, “You don’t make any money from sports.”

How many new immigrants want their children to have a better way of life? Becoming a doctor or a lawyer is a prime aspiration in the Jewish family’s tradition. My mom’s parents focused on music and a good education. Little Gigi would even stigmatize my mom saying, “If you can’t play properly, you’re not worth a grain of kasha,” [Ukrainian for buckwheat].

The things adults say in role modeling a child’s behaviour can be inspirational or a shovel of despair forever. Mom, wearing white gloves, while reading the newspaper, was very strange to look at when I was a teenager. Big Baba, Little Baba, and Mom were fastidious in cleaning their own homes. This always created unrealistic expectations for me. My dad’s athleticism was definitely passed on to me. His wheeling and dealing with people was passed on to me as I became a successful financial planner listening to my client’s needs.

Undesirable parental behaviour passed on between generations, if not challenged, can lead to lives being extreme or difficult. There are countless stories in every culture in every family where social boundaries, social interactions, mannerisms, and personality traits have embedded negative thoughts in someone’s outlook and growth in life.

MEAN, MEAN, MEAN!!! Even kids are MEAN to other kids. One never knows how much a sentence, or a label, cripples a child or even an adult possibly forever. Calling someone stupid, fat, ugly, or “You’re a Village Idiot.”

My mom constantly heard from her father, Little Gigi, that she was lazy. She was never on time for school. So, for years, she would sleep in her clothes so she would not be late in the mornings for public school.

Big Baba, my maternal grandmother, followed Little Gigi to Toronto in 1928. It was to be initially only for a year. Her family couldn’t believe it was forever. She said, “I’ll be back.” She left the upper class wooden hut to start a new life in love with Little Gigi half a world away. She started working as a waitress for \$0.10 an hour in a local restaurant while Little Gigi worked in a bathtub enamel factory. His salary was double what male blue-collar workers received at that time. After a few months because of the toxins in the air with him handling the enamel Big Baba made Little Gigi

quit. Big Baba and Little Gigi stated, “All his co-workers that remained at the factory eventually developed lung cancer in their 40s and died.”

So, Little Gigi studied first aid and became a barber running his own shop for decades. Big Baba then worked in downtown Toronto’s garment industry as a piece worker sewing men’s flies into trousers for 44 years.

Little Gigi, my maternal grandfather, was a good, honest person, a good father, and an excellent husband. Even with no formal education, he was much respected in the Ukraine community. However, he was very nervous most of the time and took medications for anxiety in the 1960s. Little Gigi always had a happy demeanor.

He used to worry before he left the house where he was going to park. The number of cars in 1950s and 1960s was not exactly what it is today, but he still worried about it for over three hours before he was going to leave the house. Big Baba, my maternal grandmother, ruled him with an iron fist. Little Gigi was hen-pecked by Big Baba throughout their marriage, but it



1963

- BJ and little Gigi [we are both wearing the same type of socks & shoes]

was still a good marriage. They stayed married for over 40 years before he died on Christmas Day 1973 from a major heart attack.

These factories were Jewish owned and always hired the new Canadians from Europe. She was ahead of her time and didn't want to be a stay-at-home mom. Both maternal grandparents were arrested and spent time in jail for protesting against the rich factory owners in the Spadina Street fabric section of downtown Toronto. Those workers wanted to form a union, get better pay, and working conditions in the sweat shops of the 1930s and 1940s.

With these two incomes, they managed to save and eventually buy their first house, then a second, then a third house all with cash. Big Baba and Little Gigi, my maternal grandparents, did eventually return to Ukraine for a vacation on their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. It was a memorable family reunion back to Kiev, Liuv, and Ternopil. It was a very emotional experience returning to relatives that they had not seen in many decades. Going into the straw-roofed and wooden house where they took their first breath was cherished. To them, meeting their friends and family that lived half a world away was to them as if they had never left the Old Country.

One of the habitual and weird mannerisms that Big Baba obsessed over was that she checked everything three times. She was a compulsive checker. I was a child looking at her doing tasks in threes. Once is not enough, the second time not good enough. It's not until the third time of this repeated action that she felt safe and reassured. Even into her late 90s, she checked three times if the oven had been turned off.

Big Baba checked if the front door to the house was locked and closed three times. Then back she went to the side door and checked it once again three times making sure that this door was well closed and locked. She had been doing this as far back as I can remember. For over 90 years, that was her habit. I asked why she did it. Big Baba simply said to make sure the door is closed, and the oven had been turned off.

How important was this watched compulsive behaviour in the development of my own behaviours? My constant hand washing, cleaning, and showering rituals are also done in threes or fours.

On my dad's side, Big Gigi and Little Baba were from Poland, coming over to initiate a new beginning. Big Gigi worked in Sudbury, Ontario as a nickel miner. Sudbury has the largest nickel mines in the world. Little Baba was a housewife and worked as a seamstress and hat maker on the side for friends and family. Every little bit of cash helped the household. Big Gigi unfortunately suffered from a mine cave in and had three knee operations on his right knee. As long as I can remember, he always used a

cane hobbling around after his mining accidents. After he was a miner, he became a carpenter by trade and worked for General Electric for twenty years. I never forgot Big Gigi always swearing in Polish when sawing or hammering away. In his later years, he wouldn't remember what he did yesterday, but his decades of jokes were never forgotten.

Big Gigi [paternal grandfather] and Little Baba [paternal grandmother] always had enough money for food and clothes but were never prosperous. They had many squabbles week in and week out, which lasted during their entire marriage. They managed to stay married for over 40 years, but it was not a great marriage.

Both sets of grandparents had two children: on Big Baba's side were mom and Uncle Ned, then my dad and Uncle Walter with their Mom and Little Baba. Both grandparents lived in their own homes in the western part of Toronto less than 10 kilometres from me.

There were always jealous rages between the two sides of our family. Historically, the Poles always hated the Ukes due to hundreds of years of geo-political wars. My mom's side had a bit more money than my father's. Fights were a constant threat to all social gatherings. There was not a birthday or holiday that didn't end without one side or the other walking out. Screaming fights were par for the course. Someone would walk out and avoid the other side of the family for weeks, months, or even one year after a large fight.



1966 April

- 1<sup>st</sup> Communion Mom, Dad, Kevin, Big Gigi, & BJ

Little Baba always accused my mom of not feeding me and being lazy. I was extremely active, therefore slim but never hungry. Little Baba wanted me to have two warm meals a day. But my mother was juggling a public school teaching career and a family and didn't want to be a kitchen slave.

So, two warm meals were not possible.

Ah, yes, family dynamics, what a laugh? Mainly, it was Little Baba who said something dumb, which caused uproars. The tension related to whether or not peace was about to be broken was like a time bomb ticking away. This could be anytime, anyplace, and at any moment! One time, Little Baba accused Mom of sleeping with Dad's chiropractic patient, Al Palvonie, and making my mother pregnant with Kevin. This resulted in a great big fight, which lasted for years! Dad immediately jumped into the fire and stated that it was impossible for Mom to have slept with his patient Al since he was not a patient until a year after Kevin was born.

The Polish and Ukrainian communities in the 1930s to 1960s were a close-knit group of people. As in all countries, the immigrants tend to flock together as support, trust, language, and social interaction is key. As with all good Old Country immigrants, as soon as you walk into their homes, you were expected to sit down to a homemade meal, whatever the hour, whomever arrived. My grandparents always had the money to buy original Polish and Ukrainian breads, butchered meats, and fish. Both grandfathers would travel for a half-hour drive chauffeuring their wives just to get those well-known Ukrainian and Polish delicacies. Both Baba's never learned to drive their entire lives. They were not on a flamboyant spending spree gone haywire but were honouring a way of life with great traditional food.

I lived in Europe for 22 years and in the Middle East for five years; eating there is more of a social and family affair than in the fast-paced North American culture. Both in Canada and in the U.S., it's sit down, shove the food down your throats, then move on to the next activity. Let's get to the sports game, a movie, computer, or bar as fast as possible. When I lived in Spain, we would go for a meal at 22:00 and it would last for hours. No need to throw down a meal and sit in front of the TV all night long. My buddy Vince and I went skiing February 1995 with the Augsburg German American ski club for a week in Three Valleys, France. Then the next week, we skied in Chamonix, France, the site of the first Winter Olympics in 1924. After a hard day's skiing on the slopes of Mount Blanc, Europe's highest peak, we would literally take three hours of dining in the French restaurant's ambiance. It was a fantastic experience of gourmet cuisine with wines, cheeses, flambés, etc.

Unfortunately, these European and Middle Eastern traditions seem to have



eroded the last 20 years. At my dinner table when I was a youth, Dad and Mom always talked about things. I remember both discussing the weekend boating or skiing plans for our cottage. It gave the family the opportunity to express their concerns and share what's going on in their lives. These dinner discussions were before Dad went down to work at his chiropractic office below for the evening. Cell phones have contributed to the decline in family unity the last 10 years. Instead, it is normal to have a fork in one hand and use the other hand to manage a cell phone while texting or watching videos instead of conversing with your family, friends, or guests. I have had seven cell phones since 1993. In 2008, I gave up my last cell phone. Why? If my cell phone gets contaminated, I can't throw it in the wash machine like my clothes. So, it's useless for me to have a cell phone because it eventually gets contaminated. Buying a new cell phone every few months is not a good option for me. If my friend's cell phone gets contaminated, I will avoid these people forever or until they get a new phone. Since cell phones are off-limits for me, I become even more isolated making my OCD even more severe.

When she was 65, Big Baba, my maternal grandmother, received a letter from the mayor for successfully aiding in the development of Toronto and integrating into Canadian culture and society. Big Baba was one of the new eastern European immigrants that toiled in downtown clothing factories for 44 years.

In Toronto in the 1930s - 1940s, my grandparents, like other Eastern bloc immigrants, were ostracized. In the 1940s - 1950s, it was the Chinese who experienced similar discrimination. The next wave of immigrants to struggle and assimilate were the Italians in the 1960s.

From Pakistan, Sikhs came in the mid-1970s - 1980s and in 1990s, the Jamaicans followed. Now, it is the Iraqi, Syrian, and Afghanistan refugees who are the newcomers. Polish, Chinese, Italian, Pakistani, or Newfie [Canadians from Newfoundland] jokes were a way of life in a diversified multicultural city like Toronto. Unfortunately, this social mixture produced small, ethnic street gangs. Hostile threats between neighbourhoods evolved with every ethnic group that was vying for a piece of turf. Some of these gangs include the following: The Triad of Vancouver, Mafia of Toronto, and New York gangs.

Human nature is unfortunately universal when it comes to bigotry. The majority of citizens blame some new ethnicity, creed, skin colour, or group for their native country's misery. Unfortunately, people discriminate against the disabled the world over. I have witnessed this firsthand in many countries. People are rude to you, or mean, or avoid you, or don't want to

help you out. I make sure that unless it's absolutely necessary, I never tell anyone about my severe OCD. The past five years, I have had landlords refuse apartments that I wanted to rent as soon as they found out that I was on a government disability income. I told them, "I'm educated, I'm responsible, and I have a guaranteed income to pay your rent." They still refused me. At age 58, I had no choice but to receive a monthly provincial disability income. If I had not done this, I would be living as a homeless person under a bridge. For thirty years, I was self-employed.

Living at the poverty line for the past 10 years, I have witnessed discrimination from banks in Canada. I applied for a credit card in 2020. Since I was out of the country for 29 years, I had a very thin credit history and was refused a card. As a financial planner, I was registered on Wall Street for 27 years after passing my National Association of Security Dealers, [NASD] four-hour investment exam. I always told my clients if they can't pay for something other than a car or house with money saved, then don't use credit cards, and pay interest on their purchases. I was turned down by two banks, even though I had the financial knowledge, was financially responsible, and never missed paying my rent and utilities in seven countries the past 40 years. I was turned down because I had an unfortunate low-income level. I eventually got my first credit card when I was 64. Credit card companies don't want financially responsible people that pay off their balance every 21 days. People with compulsive spending disorders enrich credit card companies by not managing their finances responsibly. They fall in a never-ending trap paying off the ever-escalating interest charges. For over seven decades, credit card companies hid their exorbitant fees and interest charges making billions in profits off the back of hardworking consumers. People with disabilities have suffered disproportionately since their income is very low.

Before I had a credit card, I was unable to have the freedom to shop online, rent a car for a day, or reserve a hotel room for a weekend ski trip.

Before my mom and dad were married, many friends from both sides told my mom not to marry my dad. Since she was in love and overwhelmed with his looks, charm, confidence, and a prosperous future, she refused to listen. Everyone's advice fell on deaf ears. What Mom saw in Dad was self-assurance and self-belief that her father, Little Gigi, did not have. My mom was a goody two shoes. My mom wanted was to be a Ukrainian princess and not take care of the kids like an old-fashioned European mother did. Mom coined the term "Portuguese mom," meaning that she did not want to be an old fashioned mom. She was a perfectionist. She was also naive, honest, and trustful. She was an excellent student and would eventually become a public-school teacher for 32 years in downtown Toronto. She

entered university at the age of 17 because of good grades.

My mom graduated from the University of Toronto as a teacher in 1957, and my dad graduated from the Chiropractic College in 1958. Well, he sort of graduated. The last year, Dad was caught cheating on his exams and was forced to leave his studies. He was basically kicked out for inappropriate behaviour. Had it not been for the fact that Mom was pregnant at age 21, Dad would never have been allowed to repeat his last year as Mom broke down and cried in front of the Canadian Chiropractic Evaluation Board. She pleaded that his cheating on exams was just a bad mistake. The Board felt sorry and allowed him to repeat his last year. Since it was my mom's first year of teaching, my mom supported my dad financially his last repeated school year.

Both worked their way through university. Mom played the violin every weekend throughout high school in a band, playing for weddings, bar mitzvahs, and parties. She made about \$10 - \$20 per weekend, which was a lot of money for a high school student in the early 1950s. She saved enough to put herself through the University of Toronto. Dad delivered beer to houses and shops for extra money while at the Ontario Chiropractic College. Among other things, he would have affairs with women who ordered beer. Dad was always the lady's man. He thought he was God's gift to women.

One must remember the cost of university in the 1950s was only a few hundred of dollars per semester. When I went to York University, room/board and tuition was over \$5,500 in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Today, it's over \$50,000 at a minimum. Then again, it's over \$75,000 per year to go to Harvard or Yale in 2023.

Mom became pregnant with me in 1957. As a Protestant, she went to her minister and asked for permission to have an abortion. She was refused, excommunicated, and made to feel guilty about bringing a child into the world out of wedlock. Then she went to Dad's priest at the Catholic church. Again, she was booted from the church for asking to abort me. My grandparents on Dad's side were church-going people but not obsessed with religion. Big Gigi went to church as Little Baba stayed home praying. On Mom's side, Big Baba and Little Gigi met more hypocrites in the church than in normal life, so, religion was not a big factor in their lifestyle. The same religious zealots that they fled from in the Ukraine were the ones that controlled the power in their new Toronto churches. One need not be a church or mosque follower to have honest, sincere values.

Mom then went to a doctor and told him she became pregnant by a married man. This was Dad's idea to have me aborted. The doctor did not

believe a word she was saying and had her leave his office. Being pregnant in the 1950s had a huge amount of social stigma. She stayed out of the public eye as much as possible months and months before my birth. In fact, my dad's plan was to isolate me from their friends after I was born for about five years until he was a rich and successful chiropractor. Then and only then, it would be accepted by people based on his prominence and status. I found this out when I was 42 years old and still couldn't believe my mom loved and married him.

Dad was extremely athletic and charming. He tried out for the Toronto Argonauts Canadian Football League and was into track and field in high school. He played basketball, squash, golfed, skied, and scuba dove as he built up his practice. He even tried to get into acting once as an Elvis double. One time, he went down to audition in Buffalo, New York in the early 1960s. He was definitely a good-looking guy. But as Nadia said, "I married a hunk and what did it get me? Nothing but misery."

I was born seven weeks before my parents were married. Even though I was not present at the wedding, my birth was still a huge hush hush event. The fact is Big Baba [maternal grandmother] and Little Gigi [maternal grandfather] were going to help my dad out financially by paying for his last year in college and set him up in his own chiropractic office with \$5,000. That was another incentive to marrying Mom. At that time, in 1957, it was lots of money. To this day, I believe that was the main reason Dad was forced to get married to Mom. Social pressure was another reason. The stigma placed on a mother out of wedlock was unbearable. Nadia loved my dad and me; my dad just went along for the chiropractic college and office startup money to fulfill his hidden agenda. How many marriages are built from day one with this transparent deception?

Mom had to go back to work as a teacher within weeks of my birth to support the family since dad was redoing his last year in chiropractic college. Not being especially athletic and strong, this was hard for her to handle. As she juggled her way by putting my dad through college, having myself as a new baby, and having to make all of the bread and butter for the family, Mom developed jaundice within weeks of returning to teaching. The stress was starting to take its toll.

So, I was dropped off at a foster home for about six months at the age of six months. The bond between baby and mother has been broken forever. We were never close. I found this out from Big Baba and Mom at 42 years old. I had completed my inpatient stay at the OCD Maudsley Clinic in London, England, and it was my first time in 16 years back in my mom's house in Toronto.

What my dad saw in Mom's family was stability. Big Baba and Little Gigi had a harmonious, loving marriage with little friction and fighting even though Big Baba controlled Little Gigi. Big Gigi and Little Baba, my paternal grandparents bickered all the time. Apparently, my parents visited me several times a week throughout the next few months at the foster parents' home.

Since both were university educated and came from good homes, I find it hard today to understand how they could have abandoned me like that. Finally, after seven months, when I was 13 months old, they decided to bring me back into their not so wonderful world. So, I spent my days at Little Baba and Big Gigi's house eight kilometres from where my parents lived. I would typically spend some weeknights and weekends at home with my parents depending on how they felt.

Little Baba loved me and my two cousins more than anything else. She let her overbearing love of the grandkids get in the way of my parents and my uncle and aunt's guidance and rearing decisions. She did not listen to the parental guidelines set out by them and undermined their authority.

Now here's the key to my entire upbringing: Little Baba and my mom never had a good relationship. Little Baba denigrated Mom for getting pregnant. Mom was 21 and a virgin and Dad was 27 and a lady's man with lots of sexual experience. Little Baba did not want to blame her son, Frank, for being promiscuous. She did not want to accept any of his faults. Mom was treated like a slut - dirty and disgusting in Little Baba's eyes. She came from a peasant's background and used old country values to blame Mom all the time. Little Baba toxified the relationship between Mom and Dad for the entire 12½ years they were married. I was in a vicious triangle with three dysfunctional adults.

Dad told me for decades that Big Baba was always meddling in their marriage and he felt that Big Baba might as well have been a second wife, when in fact it was Little Baba in the opposing mother-in-law role that caused all the friction. Little Baba was very insecure, with low self-esteem and she constantly meddled in her two sons' marriages.

I remember one fight that Mom and Little Baba had when I was five years old. Mom dragged me away screaming to her Peugeot car. I was yelling, "I don't want to leave Little Baba's; I don't want to leave!" I remember Little Baba snickering at how she had caused this stress and corrosion once again between Mom and me. Little Baba was mean and insecure. She also played havoc in the marriage of my Aunt Mary and Uncle Walter. The only person Mom had to confide with was her mom, Big Baba, and not Dad.

Dad and Little Baba were unsupportive towards Mom. Mom never had a

great relationship with Little Gigi, her dad. Mom and Big Gigi had a good relationship. I can never remember them fighting once. I always remember Little Baba having her daily anxiety attacks and screaming at everyone.

Little Baba wanted to defend and protect Dad no matter what he did. It was a vicious triangle that uprooted Mom and Dad's already fragile marriage. This tension resulted in Little Baba undermining Mom's authority to discipline her children.

All my family's adults were inept, and my mom was overwhelmed by her situation. They were not responsible parents or grandparents. As a baby or little boy, I was not responsible for their actions. I was 62 years old when I finally pieced that part of my life together with the help of intense therapy from Dr. Beatrice Breitling.

Even though Little Baba took care of me daily, approximately from one year old to age four, when I went to kindergarten, Little Baba's home was still a toxic environment to grow up in. I was shuffled around like a yo-yo in that time. Whenever the hostility erupted, I went to Mom and Dad's or Big Baba's. This is why in all the times in the 89 places that I have lived in, I have never felt safe or secure. It was never a home; it was just a place to hang my hat.

Both grandmothers when preparing a meal for the family, never sat down to eat the meal with the family. They were up and down and up and down throughout the entire meal serving up dishes, removing dishes, serving more mushrooms, cutting bread, serving seconds, getting refreshments filled again, etc. It was a nonstop up and down yo-yo effect. Why this culinary concern for everything to be perfect for the family and visitors?

The only way that their meals could be prepared to their satisfaction was that they had to run around like chickens doing a majority of the work. It was like clockwork. When told to sit down and eat, or when assisted, they would just ignore it and carry right on.

Before the meal was half over, Big Baba would start asking who wanted dessert and how big a helping. Constant kitchen anxiety was the norm. This was not just during a big Sunday or festive family dinner but every prepared meal. Their daily culinary ritual was to be compared to dining at a Michelin-rated gourmet restaurant.

I always remember whenever Little Baba [paternal grandmother] heard of any bad news or perceived bad news; she thought that the sky was going to fall in. It was an instant anxiety attack. She would run around saying, "Oh God, oh God" in Polish. That went on several times a day at the slightest possibility of an accident to any of the family, or to anyone in the

neighbourhood, or anyone she knew. Instant stress and anxiety personified her true nature.

Little Baba would make Big Gigi hobble out to the garage when they ate fish every Friday. Big Gigi grilled the fish in the garage so the cooking smell in the kitchen would not permeate all over the house.

She was a constant cleaning fanatic. I always remember when she held her pointer finger out all the time like a ballet dancer. Even when she would sit down and rest, the left and/or right pointer finger would stick out straight, not touching the other fingers. I asked her about this once when I lived there one summer in the early 1980s. I was in my mid 20s and she was now in her 70s. Little Baba could not give me a reason and just said, "I don't know why my finger sticks out, I always do it." I unfortunately picked up this habit like many other OCD sufferers do.

My mom was a primary school teacher in Toronto's inner city. It was her income alone that supported the family until Dad's practice started to be profitable in the early 1960s. All Mom's students were first generation Canadians and had mothers that would do anything for their children if needed. That was the traditional European family cultural values that these new immigrants had grown up with. When my parents separated in 1970, the communication between Mom and I were abrasive and became detrimental to my upbringing in my teenage years.

Without having a parent to talk to, I became more and more introverted and isolated as an adolescent. Food and shelter were not enough for a young teenager in search of a proper role model and emotional support. My mom abandoned me months after childbirth and she abandoned me as a young teenager.

I firmly believe if I was raised by another functioning family that didn't have three women who raised me that were compulsive, my OCD would be less severe. If I didn't have a mom that abandoned me at six months old and if I had a dad that had not abandoned me at the age of 12½, my life would definitely have not been smothered with severe OCD. The anxiety centred around my family's dynamics and abandonment got channeled into the OCD I have had for decades. I was genetically susceptible to OCD based on my families' genetic history. My environment totally pushed me over the edge into my OCD disorder for life.

The only thing in my childhood that was exceptional was we were the only family in the entire neighbourhood that could afford to have a cottage where we could go skiing, and boating. There was seldom bickering in the house between my parents, just between Little Baba and Mom. I can only remember one huge fight between my parents over who was going to take

the kids. As I was growing up, I had no idea of all my dad's shenanigans. What I do remember is, he was money hungry and wanted to make a million dollars as fast as possible.

Mom and Dad were in the new generation, the educated, and upwardly mobile era. Everyday adult stresses were hidden from both my brother, Kevin, and me. My brother is seven and a half years younger than I am. We lived in the western part of Toronto, primarily in an ethnic community. Mainly Germans and Poles were in our neighbourhood.

When I was in public school, I remember the Walk of Shame or the Walk of Acceptance every Sunday evening before going to bed. That was when my dad sitting on his white leather La-Z-Boy recliner produced my \$0.25 allowance that week for being a GOOD BOY. I would take that long walk over to the living room corner to either be praised for being a good kid or scolded for being just a kid. For a public-school kid, that was a lot of money. Instead of spending it on candies and gum like most kids did, I saved up for several weeks and bought tiny, tiny dinky toys. Those little model-sized vehicles were fun to play with.

My conditioning towards spending properly was starting to be formed. I remember one of my good school friends, Michael Williams, received \$1.25 per week from his stepdad. A bribe for replacing love or just a way to keep him from remembering the hardships of his dad dying? Michael would go into the local tuck shop and spend \$0.25 every day on candy and gum. Nowadays, you give your child \$20, and it's gone in two minutes at 7-Eleven. Back then, it was one cent for Double Bubble Gum, a huge "Oh Henry" chocolate bar and bags of chips were five cents each.

One must earn money to appreciate money. If everything is given to the person, then that handout is taken for granted and not respected. One of the things I admired about Dad was his ability to be a goal setter and goal getter. He went right to the head of a company or office in an organization and didn't waste days and days going from one sub-ordinate to the other.

I remember Dad asking to borrow \$10 from me way back in the mid-1960s. Trust was the key issue here. But at the age of seven, that was a lot of money and I didn't know if I could trust my own father. As it turned out, after hours of deliberation, I gave Dad the money. About a week later, I got the money back with the full thanks of the loan; this was another learned financial lesson. The first epic recollection I ever had of money was when I had saved up about a year's worth of Christmas, birthday, and Easter cash gifts for a bright Orange Fast Back 100. In 1966, it was the latest thing in bicycling. I had a bright yellow banana seat, Easy Rider handlebars, chrome T-Bar backrest and speedometre/odometre. It was the first status



symbol I ever worked for. My parents could have easily bought it for me, but they didn't want to have a spoiled brat. The first time my Aunt Wanda saw me on the bike, she said, "What a good investment you have made." I immediately answered, "No Aunty, it's a purchase not an investment." I knew then that it would never be worth more after than at the time of purchase. Was this the start of a good financial planning mentality?

I enjoyed an adventurous lifestyle despite bickering adults. We lived in the upper floor of the FICA Clinic. My dad's chiropractic office was on the main floor. We lived in the two-bedroom apartment above. It was a large white house on Roncesvalles Avenue, which was the main Central Business District of the High Park area of the city. High Park would be considered Toronto's version of New York's Central Park. Although not downtown, it is still a beautifully preserved area of the city. The park was ceded to the city of Toronto by architect, surveyor, and engineer, George Howard, in 1873.

Going camping up north to get out of the city in the early 1960s was a standard weekend event. Mom used to have the cooking done for the weekends before we left Friday evenings. Potato salad, friend chicken, vegetables, cookies, and beverages were prepared beforehand. For a kid, sleeping overnight in a van was the coolest experience ever! Eating in a Volkswagan van was also neat. We were always up at Wasaga Beach and Collingwood, which is 130 kilometres north of Toronto. This was a Provincial Park on Nottawasaga Bay. It is on the southern tip of Georgian Bay, Ontario. In fact, Wasaga Beach is the world's longest freshwater sandy beach, running for 14 kilometres. Georgian Bay is no small pond either. From north to south, it is 120 kilometres long and 50 kilometres wide. This was Canada's version of a small Daytona Beach. Cars drove on Wasaga Beach.

There were all types of fun sports activities, which included hiking, boating, water sports, and of course, tanning on the white sandy Wasaga Beach. In the summertime, it was packed with vacationers. We camped in the van a couple of years before Dad borrowed money from his receptionist, whom he was sleeping with, and bought a cottage 130 kilometres north of Toronto.

A couple of Dad's patients and Big Gigi completely renovated the cottage. They had worked on the cottage for six months before the deed was actually signed in Mom's name. Yes, Mom's. This was done so that if creditors ever came after my dad's assets, he actually owned nothing.

The three-bedroom cottage was completely paneled and insulated in 1966 as a skiing chalet, with a septic tank and running water. Sitting right on the shores of Georgian Bay made it a fishing, water/snow skiing, and boating

paradise.

The main reason that Dad wanted the cottage was yes, to ski and boat, but he wanted it to screw the women he met while skiing and boating too. He would take the odd day off in the middle of the week or stay over on a Monday as a long weekend. Hiding anything never occurred to my dad.

All year round, we would leave every Friday evening in the beige 1963 classic Thunderbird Dad had. Mom was responsible for getting all the clothes and groceries ready for us. The T-Bird would be packed to the hilt with clothes, some building supplies, tools, and groceries. It was such a harmonious, comforting feeling, seeing everything packed and loaded. The summers were filled with playing at the campground beside our three-bedroom winterized cottage. At nights, I would hear the bands play tunes of the 1960s *Green-Eyed Lady*, which was a classic that still sings in my mind.

The best memories I have of my youth were at the cottage. Skiing, climbing trees, playing soldier, throwing rocks into the bay, going across the street, and playing with the kids at the summer camp are great memories. Yes, it was nice to go skiing, boating, fishing, or hunting, but building a tree house was the best. I first learned to climb a tree when I was nine. This was a first step towards challenging my physical abilities. My dad didn't teach me to climb trees, one of his patients, Al Palvonie, did.

In fact, Little Baba blamed Mom for having Al Palvonie impregnate her, producing my brother, Kevin. This was impossible since Al became my dad's patient a full year after Kevin was born.

## **Back in Toronto**

At the time, in the early 1960s, chiropractors were not considered to be mainstream medicine. Most of my dad's patients were blue collar workers. My dad accepted jars of jam, pickles, sports tickets, etc. as methods of payment, not just the five dollars for a chiropractic adjustment. One thing my dad did well was to build his practice up with lots of hard work. Dad's generosity and kindness influenced me significantly. I never started my 29-year financial planning career for the money. I wanted to help my clients achieve financial freedom, money was a secondary reward.

We lived above the office in a two-bedroom apartment. It was convenient for Dad to open his practice at 10:00 am, close for lunch then reopen at 19:00/7:00 pm in the evening. Wednesday afternoons, he set aside time for golf or squash. Unfortunately, Dad was never available for family time other than weekends where we would go to the cottage doing what he

wanted to do. Mom was also able to get to her school within a 20-minute drive to the center of the city. So, Dad's office with our apartment overhead was a good location for the both of them.

Due to several years of hard work, both incomes started to ensure a good middle-class lifestyle. Unfortunately, Dad always wanted to make a million dollars overnight. To further finance his extravagant lifestyle, Dad engaged in non-professional sales within his chiropractic office. He sold a small plastic makeup mirror, which was available at the receptionist's front desk. This palm-sized mirror included a light, which was very modern at that time.

My dad always criticized Dr. Sydoruk, my brother's godfather, for being too conservative and stupid. Walter ended his career as a dentist with several million dollars in assets in West Toronto properties. At the time, they were good friends and played sports together at the University of Toronto's Hart House. Dr. Sydoruk, with his decades of hard work and honest property investments in western Toronto, was worth over five million dollars when he died. My dad always wanted to cheat the system and jump forward in large steps and was broke the last 30 years of his life.

Dad put my mom on a strict \$25 per week budget. That was to buy all the groceries and pay the dry cleaners. Even though Mom made a fair teacher's salary, her income was controlled by Dad.

Dad always bought expensive stereo, golf, ski, and scuba gear in the 1960s. His medical office was completely renovated by Big Gigi. Dad, was flamboyant and vain his entire life. I never had those traits; personal possessions never meant a lot to me. Several times, we drove down to Buffalo, New York to smuggle state of the art stereo components over the border duty free. He used my baptism money which I received from relatives, for pilot flying lessons. Dad never paid me back that money. That was completely dishonest and not fatherly. He went down to Buffalo a second time to buy an expensive pro golf set.

Dad had to have the best and dress the best. It didn't matter what my mom wore as long as he was the professional doctor and looked good. He had to have his expensive play toys. When we crossed the border from trips to the U.S., I was always in the back seat sleeping or sitting on the smuggled top of the line stereo components. Most likely, a customs officer, in those days, was not going to inspect a family car looking for tax free goods.

One of the major flaws that Dad had was that he was a constant womanizer. In 1960, he had to fly down to Mexico to get an abortion because he got one of his patients pregnant. I asked my dad about this when I reunited with him by Skype video in 2002 and several times after. He said he just flew

down with the female to support her. I asked, “Who flies down to Mexico with a stranger?” At the time, this was a risky operation. He exploited his golden pretty boy image, paid for the abortion, and made the flight with his girlfriend to Mexico. Whether it was his secretary or a woman, he picked her up at the hotel by the Toronto airport he frequented. There was always a fling going on.

At an annual chiropractic convention in the mid-1960s, Dad used the President of the Chiropractic Association’s name to get a hotel room so he could have a one night stand with a woman he had met. He was caught in bed with that woman. Dad got in big trouble with the Chiropractic Board over that one.

Dad always degraded Mom in front of others. As a doctor, he was the almighty. His shit just didn’t stink. If you didn’t stand up to him, he’d just verbally roll over you and put you down. I learned about Dad’s affairs as Mom was crumbling under the weight of a \$250,000 bankruptcy in 1970. As a kid, I idolized my dad for being so athletic, a wheeler dealer, and a caring doctor. As a child, your dad is the be all and end all in any boy’s eyes. These womanizing anti-social behaviours were never brought to my attention until I was thirteen after Mom and Dad separated. I was saddened to learn about it. This was significant since a teenager’s brain is not developed and I could not cope with losing my dad. My dad’s disappearance as well as his shenanigans, along with the three women who were anxiety prone and clean freak fanatics, initiated my OCD when I was thirteen.

One of the mean things my dad did was when I was in third grade. We were walking to the library from the Argentina Public School. On the way, we passed in front of my dad’s chiropractic office. This was a large two-story building painted white like a medical clinic.

My dad came out of the office to see me. He shouted out so that everyone could hear, “Bryan, why are you at the back of the class, is it because you are so stupid?” Well, that is just not the positive feedback an eight-year-old needs to hear in front of his school buddies. So, after our library sessions had finished, I didn’t know whether to stand at the back, the middle, or the front of the line going back to school. I walked near the front of the line beside my teacher. Thank goodness Dad did not come out to embarrass me again.

When I was younger, he would even say to me, “Come to your Dr. Dad to tie your shoes.” Obviously, this was in front of as many adults as possible. Yes, I was too young to properly tie my shoes at that age, but why did he need the constant recognition? It wasn’t until decades later while in

therapy that it made sense that he was insecure and needed to feel superior to everybody.

Dad always said, "You have to take care of Numero Uno." Since he has abandoned five children with three different wives, that belief ruled till the last years of his life. His game plan was to show how masculine he is, such as actor Anthony Quinn fathering children until age 90. Well, leaving your children with three different wives is not being a good role model, especially when the others were all infants and myself, a pre-teen.

I remember receiving a marble with a golden band around it from my parents when I was in the third grade. It had been inscribed, "Do unto others as they would do unto you." I still live by that belief today. One does not have to be religious to live a good, honest life. Just be a good person and live by these morals and virtues.

At that time, no matter what the husband did in a marriage, it was stand by your man and till death do us part. Big Baba and Mom started to build up a very strong relationship at this point since Dad had broken many marriage vows. Big Baba always said, "Stay, stay, stay, maybe your husband will change?" Well, the story goes that a leopard never changes its spots. Even though there were many problems in the marriage, my brother and I had no idea how rough it was for my mom.

Dad wanted to make a million dollars overnight. Instead of waiting before equity was built up in his medical practice, he always used his good looks and doctor's title to get more and more loans from the banks. He purchased one house on credit in the early 1960s. Then bought a 1963 Thunder Bird on credit. Then he bought the two-story brick house next door a few years later. Between his expensive sports hobbies and large purchases, money was not very plentiful even with both incomes. Mom could handle budgeting, whereas my dad had to have things now.

We had a major house fire in the property we owned next door one summer's day in 1964. My dad and I were sitting in the front reception area where his secretary sat. He noticed that more and more pedestrians started to linger in front of our two houses. No one came in to say a word that our second house had started to burn. Finally, Dad went outside, and it was a race for the firemen to get there before the roof caught fire. Fortunately, the firefighters saved our roof, another couple of minutes and the whole building would have been lost. The insurance company did replace the majority of the building, but as in all property insurance claims, rarely does a company ever pay out 100 percent of a loss. Dad renovated the property, then rented it out. So, there was always a small bit of financial stress around.

The next thing my dad purchased was a van. In 1965, Big Gigi converted it into a camping/sleeping van with fold-out beds, a kitchen table, and a refrigerator. This was 10 years before such vehicles became mainstream necessities.

Since both parents wanted to break away from the typical old country Polish and Ukrainian mold, we were gone most weekends in the van up north to cottage country. I did not attend the standard Saturday Ukrainian School that many of my Ukrainian peers did.

One of his best Chiropractic friends was Dr. Dave Artis, a good-looking, black, young professional who loved white women. So, it is no wonder that they went to bars together to meet women. Dave had Caribbean roots. Considering we lived in Toronto, he was not discrete with his affairs. Once again, Dad was on the shit list with the Board. Among those who knew and did not like him, he was a thorn that got away with too many questionable actions.

In the early 1960s, it was forbidden for chiropractors to advertise their services. My dad printed up a few hundred flyers with Dr. Artis's name and address on them. He had some of his patients go around the Baby Point Jane Street and Runnymede Avenue neighbourhoods where Dr. Artis practiced and handed out the flyers on cars and in mailboxes. The medical doctors disrespected these so-called quasi doctors. So, it was not too long before a formal complaint was lodged with the Chiropractic Governing Board. Both were up in front of the Board for misrepresenting the profession.

The final straw with the Chiropractic Board was when my dad was sent to prison in Toronto for having stolen property in our garage. It was December 1968 when Dad made headlines in the Toronto newspapers. A patient asked Frank if he could store some household furniture in our double garage for a few months.

My dad figured he could make a couple of bucks renting out the garage and helping out his male patient. So, for several months, our double garage was packed with high-end furniture. For months, I could not go into the garage to get my wagon, basketball, or toys. Mom usually got them for me. The Ontario Provincial Police and Toronto Metro Police had been keeping an eye on my dad's medical practice for weeks. When they arrived Tuesday, December 24<sup>th</sup> with a search warrant, they looked all over: the garage, my dad's practice, our two-bedroom apartment on the second floor, then down in the basement. The officer looked at one of the lamps that my dad had in our remodeled basement. Sometimes it was rented out to bachelors. It was a one-bedroom flat. He asked my dad if it was his lamp and Dad

said that it was his. The cop flipped the high-end lamp upside down and there was a serial number on its base. The serial number matched the list of goods that had been stolen from a furniture store four months prior.

That night on Christmas Eve, Dad was arrested for having over \$5,000 of stolen property. We always celebrated Christmas Eve with a huge meal and opening presents. Frank was sentenced to three and a half weeks in the Don Jail in Toronto and fined. Fortunately, Mom had me go into my bedroom and I did not see Dad with handcuffs on. I was 10 when this happened. The next morning, the Toronto Telegram and Toronto Star reported, "Doctor arrested for stolen property." The neighbourhood laughed and mocked my dad's FICA Clinic now. Mom suffered a mild nervous breakdown during all the chaos. Her parents and some remaining friends united and offered great emotional support. She realized that her dreams for a better, happier life were slipping away.

The night of the furniture store break-in, Mom's best university friend, Nadia, and husband, Walter, were playing bridge in the west end of Toronto with Mom and Dad. They played every Saturday for years. I remember the great times I had sleeping over there. Well, Walter refused to testify in court on Dad's behalf. He was a rising shining star at the Bank of Montreal and did not want this to jeopardize an upper management position. Dad wrote many letters to Mom while in jail. He was despondent and begged for Mom to stay with him.

*"But, before you go pointing fingers, make sure  
your hands are clean."*

*- Bob Marley*

As a result, in the spring of 1969, the Canadian Chiropractic Board rescinded my dad's license. It was during the early months of litigation that Dad still had his office open. The case took over a year to settle. Dad then decided to open a restaurant in Barrie, Ontario, as a new career. Dad had his chiropractic office open a couple of days a week and then went up to run the restaurant a couple days a week. He knew nothing about the restaurant business. This location was 100 kilometres north of Toronto in a country hick town at that time. In the 1990s, it became a nearby communal suburb for downtown Toronto office workers wanting to live in a country cottage environment. Dad decided to buy an old Chinese restaurant in downtown Barrie. The town had only about 100,000 inhabitants but plenty of cottage traffic and fishermen coming up for weekend trips. Once again, my dad

coerced my mom to borrow from banks in Barrie and Toronto. Mom reluctantly obtained a double, then triple mortgage on our first house, the second house, and cottage since everything was in her name. The large sums of money were used to renovate this dingy old-fashioned restaurant. His credit limit was as high as he could get using his doctor's title and charm as collateral.

Since Dad had a criminal record, he was not allowed to have a liquor license for the disco on the second floor. Mom was put in another compromising position, to apply for and obtain a liquor license. She really didn't want anything to do with the restaurant. But it was Stand by your Man once again. With all the bad press having her husband's name drawn through mud due to his prison sentence, many of Mom's teaching colleagues and friends abandoned her.

The name of the restaurant was to be *Caraval*<sup>2</sup> and it was to be totally refurbished. These had broad bows, a high narrow poop deck, and usually three masts with lateen square sails. The back of the restaurant was turned into a posh 50-seat steakhouse. With elegant sea pictures, dark sea blue wallpaper, and shipping ropes, were used to spice up the area. The front part was turned into a 150-seat café serving burgers, homemade soup, meal of the day, and desserts etc.

Upstairs, my dad's ingenuity and dreams were put to work. The second floor was turned into a state-of-the-art disco. Every pole and railing had brass or thick shipping ropes. Portholes were placed along the sparkled dark sea background walls.

The dance floor was cut in the shape of a wave. Not just any wave, but a stainless-steel wave. Only the third of its kind in all of North America in 1968. The others were in Miami. This disco was twenty years before its time. In Toronto, it would have succeeded, but in the late 1960s in Barrie, it was too advanced for its time.

From the summer of 1968 to April of 1969, he played the A, B, C shuffle game. When my mom was in Toronto, Dad was screwing the waitresses in Barrie. When Mom, Kevin, and I arrived in Barrie, Dad was screwing his other girlfriend at the cottage in Collingwood, 55 kilometres away. When we were at the cottage, Dad was back in Toronto with his Toronto girlfriend. Mom had enough.

The cook was stealing food that Dad had ordered and was reselling it. He was an ex-con who Dad had hired. Dad found a 21-year-old named Clarence and hired him as an assistant manager. He just idolized my dad. Clarence had little experience and was supposed to run everything. Dad still practiced even though his license was pulled. He had hoped it would

<sup>2</sup>Caraval was the name of small 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-century ships used by Britain



be reinstated.

What solidified my dad's downfall happened a few months later; a high school student in Barrie left the stove on after cooking his lunch and left to go back to school. He happened to set half the downtown city block on fire, including the restaurant. An unfortunate stroke of bad luck was the fire insurance had run out literally one week before. The creditors found out and started to demand their money back. Dad was late in paying wages and was paying one creditor as the other creditor was threatening him. It was a financial mess. Everything was in my mom's name and the banks and creditors were after both for all debts and missed payments.

The straw that finally broke the martial camel's back was one spring day in 1969, a Saturday morning. Mom, Kevin, and I drove up to the cottage unannounced. Halfway up to the cottage, I shouted, "There goes Big Gigi and Little Baba's [paternal grandparents] car in the other direction towards Toronto." That was an extremely unusual thing to have happened. Within a few minutes, my grandparents had turned around and had caught up to us. They said they were up at the cottage and no one was there, so they were returning to Toronto. Mom did not believe them and continued on for another 50 kilometres. Upon arriving at the cottage, she told us to wait in the car and went inside.

Mom then asked me to come and say hi and bye to Dad. I remember going into the cottage and seeing my dad cry. He was sitting on the green sofa chair handed down from Mom's parents. I had never seen my dad cry before, and I knew something was drastically wrong. That would be the last time I was face to face with my dad for 11 years. I was 12 and my brother, Kevin, was three years old. I now know that my dad had been told the marriage was over. Within 15 minutes, we were back on the road heading to Toronto again.

I didn't find out until later, but Mom had caught Dad in bed with some woman. In fact, my grandparents had found out about it too but tried to cover up for him once again. At that instant, she knew that after all the affairs, all the questionable chiropractic practices, jail sentences, and money juggling, it was enough. The end was here!!!

After Mom finally locked Dad out of the house one night in November 1969, using another set of keys, he came in that evening and started to remove clothes and personal belongings. Mom called the police. This woke Kevin and me up and we heard every word said. Adults can be so cruel to each other when a relationship turns bitter. Dad also started to remove our 26-inch black and white RCA TV we had in our living room. The TV that was purchased for the family was about to disappear. In the 1960s, a

woman had little authority or power to stop such an activity. I remember the police officer giving my dad the upper hand in all verbal battles. The TV was removed right under our noses. It was a stressful night for all. Mom ended up changing the locks to the apartment above the office the next day.

Several days later in the middle of the night, I looked out of my bedroom second-story window into the paved backyard to see my dad, Big Gigi, Uncle Walter, and a couple of Dad's patients break into the basement.

Mom made the best of it and made sure I laughed as they tried to break in through the thick mahogany basement door. Mom and I watched for a few hours while they removed all of Dad's x-ray equipment, office furniture, medical screens, and adjustment tables. They even broke into the garage and took household valuables. My basketball, football, and the little red wagon that Big Gigi gave me were taken away forever. I asked my dad and grandfather 11 years later why they had taken the toys away and they did not remember doing that. They were gone in the morning when I went to play with them. These were simple toys that were used as pawns in a cruel battle for adult supremacy.

What my dad did the next several days was to assemble everything he had and then sell it all to other chiropractors or friends. He needed cash and he needed cash fast. He needed \$10,000 to make a new life in Guatemala. The creditors, all the utility companies, banks, restaurant supply firms, lumber yards, and lawyers were all coming after both of my parents to settle the mounting debt.

So, without a simple goodbye, Dad disappeared and left Canada for Latin America. Never a dime was sent for child support for Kevin and me, no Christmas or birthday presents. He only sent two postcards from London, England, and Guatemala, nothing more for decades. No phone calls, no visits, and no telegrams. Gone from one day to the other.

What he left Mom was worthless; everything mortgaged to the hilt. There was a \$250,000 bankruptcy lawsuit Mom had to clean up. In 1970, that was a lot of money. Dad justified all this by thinking that Mom had \$250,000 of assets and that she didn't need any child support or alimony. I still missed my dad.

By the time everybody got their small pieces of the crust, it was \$0.20 on the dollar. All assets were liquidated by the banks and lawyers as fast as possible. Even Mom's teacher's wages were garnished for several years to pay back taxes to the Federal and Provincial Governments because of Dad's financial incompetence.

At the age of 39, my dad escaped. He simply abandoned his wife, two young boys, his parents, his chiropractic clinic and colleagues, and few remaining friends. My mom was 32 and had to clean up my dad's \$250,000 bankruptcy mess and get back into teaching; she would then take care of her two sons and start a new life alone. There was nothing left. Thirty years later, Dad received a compilation of all the bankruptcy documents from my mom. He still didn't want to believe that he had run away from a financial disaster. Total denial!

Between 2002 and 2017, I told Dad a hundred times about the bankruptcy. He just didn't want to take responsibility for his disaster. He finally apologized to me over the phone. My mom and brother never wanted to talk to him again since the late 1960s. I only saw my dad in person three times, between 1969 and January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, after he died; one week in 1980, one week in 1982, and 15 minutes in 1984. All that time together totaled two weeks in the past 50 years.

### **Our Big Adventure**

In the summer of 1984, my Black Forest German girlfriend Chris, her brother Hardy, and I left my contaminated world of Toronto to travel by drive-away car to Vancouver. We then took a bus to Los Angeles and stayed five weeks there. Then another drive-away car to Miami to meet my dad. We planned to stay a week. Then another drive away car to New York City for four days. Finally, back to Toronto. It was a two and a half months trip of a lifetime, covering over 14,500 kilometres.

We arrived in Miami on a Tuesday in late September and went to the address my dad had given me. It was a trailer park. I wondered what my dad was doing living in there. A woman that could hardly speak any English, only Spanish, opened the door. She said, "No Frank, no Frank." I looked in the phone book for another Fica. It was not a common name in any country. We drove into a posh neighbourhood and found a person with Fica as his last name. I said, "This has to be my dad's home." The guy that opened the door had the same last name but was unrelated to me. I then decided to go to the Dade County Police Station for help. The three of us walked in there and I told the story of how we were to vacation with Dad for one week. The officer came out 10 minutes later and asked, "Your dad's Frank Fica, right?" I showed him my Canadian passport. He then said, "Your dad was arrested several months ago smuggling two kilos of cocaine out of Texas and is doing a five-to-ten year prison sentence at the Dade County Jail."

This is the only time in my life I didn't know if I should laugh or cry. The

three of us just looked at each other in amazement. Tuesdays and Thursdays were the only visiting days at the Dade County Jail. Since it was too late that Tuesday evening, we had to visit Dad on Thursday. We returned the drive-away car the next day and rented a Ford Escort. For one week, we drove around the Miami area and the Keys. We spent many nights sleeping in the car at Marathon, Florida. The Keys are just so beautiful.

When the three of us went to visit my dad, we were allowed only 15 minutes. All the prisoners had orange jumpsuits on. All of us got into a small cubicle to speak with my dad through thick glass. There were cockroaches crawling on the walls. The Dade County Jail at that time was a scum bucket of a prison. At first, Dad told me how he had been thrown in jail because of tax fraud. I turned to Chris and Hardy that were right behind me. I then said, "Dad, enough BS, tell me the truth."

Dad told me his story. He could not work at a Miami friend's chiropractic clinic since he had no state license. He was working illegally at 7-Eleven making five dollars an hour. I found out that this woman I met a few days ago was my stepmother. She was one-year younger than I was and she was living in the trailer with Dad's one-year-old son, Derrick.

He then told us about the two kilos of cocaine that he smuggled out of Texas. I said, "Dad, why would you do a thing like that?" He said that he needed the money. Then Dad said, "Well, at least I didn't kill anyone."

Dad mentioned, "That multi-millionaire, John DeLorean, had been trapped by an FBI sting operation in a huge drug bust and got out of jail." In the *Back to the Future* film, a DeLorean car is used. Well, Dad said, "He was entrapped by the FBI and had a good Polish lawyer to set him free." He was going to borrow \$5,000 from Little Baba and get out of jail. That was basically all the money Little Baba had.

As we were escorted to the exiting area, I could not hug my dad for the last time. We had to keep two metres from each other. Dad said to Chris, Hardy, and me, "I will make it up to you." That was the last time I ever saw my dad in person. Hardy said, "Well he looks pretty happy for a guy that is going to spend the next five-to-ten years in prison." The three of us tried to make the best of our week's stay in Florida. We then took a drive-away car from Miami to New York City, where we spent three days sleeping in the car and seeing The Big Apple. Then we returned to Toronto in mid-October 1984. I was very reluctant and scared to see Toronto again since it was ground zero for my OCD contamination.

In Toronto, I found out from Dr. Artis, Dad's long-time chiropractor friend, that Dad robbed Aztec grave sites in Mexico and sold the artifacts to art dealers in the U.S. When I questioned him years later, Dad's response

was again, “Well, I didn’t kill anyone.”

Dad had befriended a prisoner during his first cocaine sentence. Their new smuggling plan was to get dead bodies in Guatemala, fill the coffins with garlic and cocaine and fly them back into the U.S. to be buried. I said, “Dad, this is a crazy idea.” Basically, there was nothing that my dad wouldn’t do for money. He didn’t care who he hurt, or who he used his entire life. It was always taking care of Numero Uno, himself. He had very few morals and little regard for others his entire life.

He spent five years serving his first cocaine smuggling sentence, was released, then three months later, was arrested again for his second cocaine smuggling incident. He never got the chance to use the coffins from the Guatemala City cocaine smuggling plan.

After doing an online criminal search of my dad in 1990, found out about his second cocaine conviction, this time, in the state of Florida. He was now at the Hernando County Jail in northern Florida for 10 years with no parole for cocaine smuggling again.

When I asked Dad about his second sentence, he lied to me and said that he had helped write letters on behalf of many prisoners and the warden hated him as a shit disturber. Therefore, his original sentence was extended and he was not convicted for a second sentence. That was a big fat lie he told.

I verbally fought with Dad dozens of times about his bankruptcy. I told him it changed my mom’s, my brother Kevin’s, and my life and caused a lot of stress in the family. When I saw Dad back in Toronto for one week in 1980 and again in 1982, we discussed this. He just left Toronto in 1970 and Mom had to clean up his financial mess. Also, it was a topic I brought up every time he mentioned Mom got it all. Mom even sent him the 40-page bankruptcy judgment from the Toronto judge. He was in total denial, telling everyone for decades that Mom took everything.

Mom’s bankruptcy was a constant theme from 2002 when I reunited with him over Skype video until January 2019. Dad died January 29<sup>th</sup> of that same year.

On Canada’s 153<sup>rd</sup> birthday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, I received an email from the DNA search company “23andMe,” confirming that I have an older half-sister. I chatted and emailed with her and found out she was living in Toronto. Lynn was born Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1953, three and a half years before me. She can’t remember our father at all. She was given up for adoption at 18 months old. Lynn was fortunate to have had very loving and stable foster parents. Mom or Dad never mentioned this, so I doubt if

they knew about Lynn.

Dad had been married three times, had four boys and one daughter, and never paid a dime in alimony or child support to any of them. He abandoned them all. He had been in prison in three countries: Canada, Guatemala, and the U.S. Dad was married to my mom and his second wife, Fabiola, at the same time. He figured his second marriage was in Guatemala City, a Guatemalan, far from Toronto, so it was ok to have two wives.

I'm so lucky I didn't turn out to be like my dad, but 180 degrees opposite.

*“Denial ain’t just a river in Egypt.”  
- attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche*

OCD IS NOT  
AN ADJECTIVE