
Chapter Eight
ALL THAT GLITTERS

He was a young kid, Bill was his name. When I say "kid," I mean younger than 18. We found him during street ministry at Geneva-On-The-Lake and opened our hearts and homes to him as we had with many others. Larry was on a trip, preaching services at the invitation of a local pastor who knew him from his Assembly of God days. He took Dianne and my sister, Laura, leaving Carol behind to oversee the work. It made some sense, as she was the oldest Christian among us and his wife, after all. But Carol turned into another person, seemingly overnight.

Randy and Gilbert shared a duplex house in Geneva. Because of its convenient location and size it became the headquarters for everything we were doing. I knew something was terribly wrong with Carol when she asked me upstairs prior to a Bible study. Thinking she probably had a communication from Larry, I was caught completely off guard when she turned quickly, stepped forward so that we were now face to face and asked, "What do you think about what I'm wearing? Do you think it will be OK for the meeting?"

The upstairs room was more than an office. It was also a bedroom. Backing up a bit, I needed out of there. I was a child of the street and knew a line had just been crossed. I thought to myself, "This woman has been in the ministry for over a decade. She knows exactly what's appropriate for this moment. This is definitely, "not cool." I was

stunned. My pastor's wife? What is this about? Mumbling something about, "You would certainly know better than I, it looks fine " I turned and walked away. Now what? Do I tell Sandy? Do I tell Larry? Instead, I chalked it up to my carnal imaginations and asked God's forgiveness but, before Larry returned, Carol left with Bill. Taking her two children with her, she didn't stay with him very long but she never came back. Why would she? Larry had been beating her for years leaving her with two broken noses and a memory that may never heal. Paralyzing shock was what we all felt, but that's when the loyalty issues began. Larry seemed to blame me, especially, and all of us generally, for the fact that one, we didn't see it coming and two, we didn't stop it. He felt us traitorously disloyal because we hadn't forcibly reclaimed his wife. I never did tell him about the situation upstairs. I never did tell him how loyal I actually was. Like everyone else I simply took the insults from a heart-broken man, searching my soul, wondering what I might have done differently.

Having Larry as a pastor was like being married to a manic-depressive who has a large helping of paranoia thrown in just for laughs. When he was on the upside there was no one like him and, when he was on the downside, there was no one like him. He was my friend. The good I learned from him lives with me still. John Engelke taught me about sports and electronics, about courtesy and respect, about family vacations and a "normal" life. But Larry taught me to love truth and beauty, to fight for what's right and shut up when you're wrong. He taught me to dig deep and dream big. He taught everyone who dared love him the meaning of sacrifice. His life taught me that transparency is better than honesty because honesty can be selective. Larry always stressed honesty and obedience but no one was allowed to be honest if that honesty presented a divergent opinion. That kind of honesty was suspect, a rebellious spirit needing rooting out. And there was no one to challenge him.

In the center of this emotional, psychological and spiritual maze was a 21-year-old kid trying to figure out who I was, where I fit into this increasingly complicated thing called life and how to be a Dad. While all this was going on, our son Jesse was born. As he grew we resembled one another so much people called him "Joe-Jesse." Of all our children he is the one, I fear, harmed most with "godly

parenting." Jonathon was not too far behind in second place. I didn't know how to be a father. I was blessed with questionable examples. My biological father taught me some Dads just "poke and run." Children are an inconvenience to their nothing lives so they walk away and never look back. My stepfather taught me that some Dads feel the only appropriate way to handle children is with a doubled up fist to the face. I now had a "spiritual" father who taught me it's biblically acceptable, strike that, **commanded** for a father to discipline children or wife in any manner necessary if they didn't toe God's line.

To put it bluntly, Larry was big on "the blueness of the wound" as having power to keep children from repeated evils. The "blueness of the wound" is a biblical description of a bruise. He wrote, "The scripture teaches, 'Beat thy son with a rod and let not your souls spare for his tears.' We're so squeamish about bruises on our children's legs but we can stand and watch their souls and emotions be mutilated." It's an unending source of sadness to know I allowed myself to trust a man who used the bible to justify my short-tempered violence against my own children. It was the easy way out, I suppose, being the predominant patriarchal model of my life. Time and healthier teaching changed my view of life and thus my approach to our younger children. Still, I sit here 30 years later, writing through tears, thinking how scary it must have been to have me as a Dad. Some memories must be walked round rather than dug through.

The Goodenough farm was no longer big enough and it was time for all of us to make the leap. Larry found a small farm straddling both sides of Fortney Road, outside Windsor, Ohio. Mrs. Seymour sold it to us on Land Contract, rejoicing that it would be used for the Lord's work. With a large, red barn on the east side of the road and a two-story farmhouse on the other, it would take a lot of work to make it fit for our purposes. Labor was unending but we didn't care. Sanctified sweat was a small price to pay to build something that might outlive us, providing hope for ourselves and those God would bring. Setting acres of fence posts, building barns, corncribs and additions to the house, we believed our efforts would be rewarded with eternal fruit. With the words, "CRC Farm" in large, black letters over the red, barn door, the entire neighborhood knew this was something different. The

final piece identifying it as ours was a three-foot, cross section of a tree trunk hung by ¾ inch hook and chain from the tree beside the driveway. Into its face one of our people hand carved a verse from Tolkien in old English letters,

"All that is gold does not glitter,
not all those who wander are lost;
the old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost" ¹

We were on our way. We changed the name of the band from Preacher and the Witness to the All Saved Freak Band. It made sense: we were all, saved freaks. In time we became a large ensemble group. Two percussionists, two keyboard players [piano AND organ], two lead guitarists, one rhythm player, one bass player, violin, cello and vocalist made for some logistical nightmares. The enclosed front porch of the farmhouse became ASFB central and, in time, the four albums we recorded became contemporary Christian classics. Thirty years later, in December of 1999, a used Brainwashed album was auctioned on e-bay.com for more than \$200. My Poor Generation, Brainwashed, For Christians, Elves and Lovers and The Sower albums were sold by the thousands to help finance the work.

We mastered our albums at Cleveland Recording, housed in an older building on Euclid Avenue. Before being torn down to make way for the burgeoning growth of Cleveland State University it was home to some well-known "Great Lakes," rock music. The Outsiders, "Time Won't Let Me," Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music," the Lemon Pipers "Green Tambourine," the Human Beinz "Nobody But Me," Grand Funk Railroad's first seven albums and the James Gang albums were all mastered here using the Cleveland Orchestra whenever needed.

The engineer and owner, Ken Hamann began building audio equipment for disc jockeys playing records at teen "canteens" at Lakewood High School, his alma mater, in the 1940s. He spent summers working at WHK radio and, after a stint in the Navy, joined

radio station WDOK as an engineer. He moonlighted at Cleveland Recording for 20 years before buying it in 1970. Designer and builder of digital audio equipment for Telarc, he was married for 50 years when he and wife Gloria left the planet within two weeks of one another, in January of 2003. About two years before his death he confided in me that he could never stand Larry but, being a local boy, he'd long known and loved our lead guitarist, a legend in Cleveland. That's why Ken was involved.

We met our producer, Rob Galbraith while on tour in Nashville in 1969. He was a studio producer for Columbia Music. How do you get a job like that? We showed up a bit late as the driver of the car carrying our equipment managed to back, dead center, into a lamppost in the hotel parking lot. Denting the bumper and jamming the trunk, we couldn't open it to get the instruments. When he finally stopped laughing, Rob shook his head and said, "Deep move." We were going to be quite a contrast to the previous group. They had just finished recording a song called, "Funky Wet Goodness," referring to a geographical region of a women's body. When Glenn, Larry, Randy and I taped a demo of a few songs, Rob appreciated our uniqueness and found sufficient value in what we were doing to fly to Cleveland to produce all four of our albums. And he did it for free. My third time in a studio, he taught all of us to use technology as an instrument and think larger than our gifts warranted.

ASFB was unusually blessed with talent. Chief among them, indeed the one person most responsible for our credibility was Glenn. More than just another "white guy trying to make an honest living by stealing black people's music," Glenn Schwartz had a reputation for personal weirdness and some "hard time, killin' floor" blues. You know, the stuff that makes a "bulldog hump a hound?" The original lead guitarist for the James Gang, Glenn was voted one of the top blues guitarists in the country by trade magazines of the day. Replaced by Joe Walsh when he moved to California to become lead guitarist for Pacific Gas and Electric, his song, "Are you ready?" topped the American music charts in 1969. Labeled "the white Hendrix"ⁱⁱⁱ by the California media, he would also be identified as "the Blue Messiah" by Cleveland's Free Times newspaper. We'd heard

word in the street that this amazing guitarist was talking about Jesus in his sets and we wanted to meet him.

We found him playing in the Backroom of Faragher's bar. Located in an "artsy" community on Taylor Road in Cleveland Heights, the Backroom occupied half the building and provided the primary draw for the business. In the very early sixties it was one of Cleveland's sought-after, trendy nightspots. Bill Cosby, the Smothers Brothers and other national notables performed there regularly. The bar was redefined in the late sixties by a teacher at Shaw High School who bought the place and turned it into a neighborhood "shot and beer" bar. Reflecting his own personal evolution in a drug saturated culture, Art Smith hung a black light picture of Mickey, Donald and Goofy smoking a bong in a prominent place in his establishment. Over time, the credo of the somewhat eclectic clientele became, "Reality is for people who can't handle drugs." To us, it was another mission field.

The presence of Pam and Kim Massmann in the band enables me to say, before ELO was ASFB. The Electric Light Orchestra appeared a few years after. Violin and cello, live on stage as an integral part of rhythmic music, was a brand new concept when we did it. And these women weren't "schlock" musicians. Classically trained, their father was conductor of the Minnesota University Orchestra. Through arrangements of the university they and their parents toured South America as a chamber quartet playing before the heads of state. Delicate voices that matched the sound of their instruments they taught the rest of us music theory in classes for the band.

The most persistent obstacle ASFB faced was the negative opinion of established churches. To be specific, the white churches. Black congregations loved us, standing up, clapping their hands and dancing in the aisles. But we weren't as well received at Our Lady of the Crackers. Mocking my singing by lifting his chin to imitate a wolf howling at the moon, one aged patriarch in Michigan gave voice to what many church leaders felt. They felt the music, as a genre, was a bastardized form of spiritual communication having "the world" as one of its progenitors. They saw the music as dangerous, influencing their teens toward a method of musical expression they'd long

preached against. Rock and roll, blues and funk corrupted rather than promoted the pure gospel of Christ and they let us know it. Fortunately, for us, we felt our call was to the religiously uninitiated. After a while, we left the churches behind.

The band played throughout the eastern portion of North America and Canada. As guests of the city of New Orleans, we played and testified at Mayor Moon Landrieu's Mardi Gras reception held at City Hall, playing in Jackson Square during the day. Our drummer couldn't make the trip so my old friend, Val Fuentes, flew in from California to fill in. We also performed at the Summer Olympics in Montreal, playing as headliners at the Man and His World pavilion. At spring break in Florida a national magazine showed up to write about the group. In fact, publications as diverse as Christianity Today, Rolling Stone Magazine and the National Courier all carried articles about the band and its music. The list could go on but you get the idea. Television, radio, colleges, churches and anyplace we could gather a crowd, we cut loose. In time, converts from the street found their way to the farm.

The most significant tool used to propagate our peculiar version of Christianity was the Freedom Bell. With the advent and evolution of underground publications, every radical, street-level organization manufactured their own literature for distribution. Like many of those papers, the Freedom Bell would've won no prize for esthetics or layout. In the beginning, everything was hand produced by non-artistic hands. It showed but we didn't care: it was the message that consumed us. Over time the paper became a full color broadsheet, generally around 24 pages, providing an outlet to publish poetry, research articles or general rants. Intensely anti-Catholic and conspiracy-oriented, we distributed more than a quarter million papers over time.

In 1970 something happened to change the direction of all our efforts. Four students were killed at Kent State University. Larry felt the Lord was directing us to the streets of Kent. We started the effort with street work leading up to a concert held in one of the university's large, auditoriums. For a short time we held Sunday services in Kent's Student Union building, eventually moving to JB's bar on

Water Street. We became familiar faces to Joe Bujak, often showing up on weekends to witness in the downstairs bar where a guitarist named Phil Keaggy played with a group called, Glass Harp. Phil went on to some notoriety in the Christian music community winning multiple Grammy and Dove awards through the years. He played with ASFB several Sundays when Glenn was thrown out by his wife and committed to the County Mental Hospital for examination. When that failed to dissuade Glenn from his faith, his family had him kidnapped by famed cult deprogrammer, Ted Patrick and held hostage in a hotel room. True, Glenn could sometimes seem a bit strange, but that was a bit excessive for a gentle soul whose only crime was to abandon a burgeoning rock and roll career to tell people about Jesus.

Larry made an arrangement with the bar owner and we started holding services at JB's on Sunday afternoons. The agreement was no alcohol served and we were free to use the larger, upstairs area for services. At its peak there were more than 125 street people and college students in regular attendance. The growth was so strong we started a "daughter" church called the Kent New Generation Church and started looking for a larger place to gather, a place more conducive to nurturing young believers. But another *free* facility, directly on Water Street, might be difficult to find.

By 1971 the local counter-culture had created a flourishing outpost of radicalism in the form of the Kent Community Store. Located in the old Jaycees Hall above Butcher Boy Meats on Water Street, the place became a combination of Berkeley and Fort Lauderdale for local hippies. Organized by many of the same individuals involved in Kent's Vietnam War protest movement they sold everything from music to memories, the location also providing a retail outlet for Kent Natural Foods, a small business started by Ron Taggart. Many of those who worked and hung out at the Community Store lived in a reputation-laden building known as the "Summit Street House." Randy and I managed to hold weekly Bible studies in one of the back bedrooms of the house and Ron became interested enough to arrange the use of the Jaycees Hall on Sundays when the store wasn't opened. Through summer and fall we shuttled between Kent

and the farm several times each week, deciding to hold our "Watch Night Service" in Kent.

A Watch Night Service is an "old-timey" name given to a New Year's Eve service in which people wait before the Lord until the New Year comes in. It was a way in which we honored God by giving Him first place in the events of every year. Filled with music, praise, testimony and much prayer, what we really hoped for was a word from God, something we could hang our hats on for guidance in the coming year. Focused on the future, attempting to peer through the mist, we never envisioned what the next few hours would bring.

ⁱ J.R. Tolkien, Fellowship of the Ring, p.182

ⁱⁱ John Hyduk, Cleveland Free Times, December 1, 1999