

PROPHECY — Jimmy, Nelson & Colleen

By Jim Golden — Chapter Three

After the dust began to settle and Bob had been buried we moved to a different part of town. The newspapers had begun to use their ink for other stories than the jealous lover who killed the cops, and life was slowly returning to normal. You have to understand that the word normal is a relative term. What was normal for our family might be considered infamous in some more "orthodox" or conservative homes. By the time I was 17 we had moved more times than I could remember and we were already on stepfather number four.

I don't remember much about my real father or my first two stepfathers. The man I was named after was a diesel mechanic. He worked for a large trucking company, rode Harley-Davidson motorcycles and loved pork barbecues and cold beer.

Doris and Jimmy seemed made for each other. The Dixie-Pig saw them laughing together on many summer nights. It was a local hangout that catered to "good ol' boy" bikers and played country music. It was a place to have a little innocent fun. Innocent is a relative term also. I was never quite sure why Jimmy and mom parted ways. I was not much more than one year old to the best of my knowledge. I think he found out that he wasn't my real father. I never saw him again until I was twelve or thirteen.

My next stepfather was a man named Nelson. He was a big switch from the kind of man my mother usually dated, or so the story goes. As I remember it, he was a lawyer. Shortly after Doris and Nelson were married, my mother brought home a little baby sister named Laura Colleen. She was a little bundle of strange sounds on the other side of the room. Something had changed upon her arrival, and I was no longer the center of the universe.

It was during this time in my life, 18 months old, that I began to develop future Marine Corps skills. One that I was particularly fond of developing was the grenade lob. During those days, Playtex hadn't invented the plastic bottle with the little collapsible bag. People still used solid glass bottles. It was with these glass bottles that I developed my "lobbing arm". I had several targets, all designed to recapture the attention I had lost with the arrival of my baby sister. When all of them seemed to fail to achieve the desired result, only one option remained--eliminate the competition!

I would have succeeded if it weren't for those blasted hand rails that kept objects out as well as they kept babies in. I do remember my failed attempts gaining me the recognition I so richly deserved. Somehow it wasn't quite what I had expected, though.

I remember even less about stepfather number two than I do about stepfather number one. Possibly because of the events that were about to take place. As the story goes, for no apparent reason Nelson burst into the apartment one afternoon and grabbed a pistol he had owned before he married Doris. Without a word he ran back out of the house. I never saw him again. It wasn't until years later that we were told that he was shot to death trying to rob a liquor store.

It is true that nobody ever promised us a rose garden, as the trite and hackneyed cliché goes. However, Doris had a knack for making me feel like a rose garden was just around the corner. One thing was certain, she had a flair for finding a new husband

when an old one would leave. Enter stepfather number three. Joel was the first stepfather I have any real recollection of, but I don't want to get too far ahead in my story. I forgot to tell you that Colleen wasn't Nelson's child. When I was twelve I found out that she was Jimmy's little girl and that's why he came back around to visit. He didn't want anything to do with me, he was just being polite, hoping to be able to get his hands on Laura Colleen.

It is a shame my mother didn't let her go to be with him. Her life might have turned out differently. I am not sure, but I think it was her way of getting him back for not loving me as his own. I never got to talk with my mother about Colleen. It didn't seem to me that she loved her. Or if she did, it was a very small love by comparison to the love she had for me. I have always felt a little ashamed for being loved so much and Colleen so little. Without God's grace and intervention we are all ruled by our unseen demons.

My memories are mine, and others might say that things were totally different. It seemed to me that Colleen lived a Cinderella existence without ever finding her prince. I was told that she was incorrigible and that because she had run away so many times she was being taken away from us and placed in a juvenile home. Some years later, after she was taken away, I saw her for about an hour at some court hearing where I was told she had turned into a prostitute and hated us. We never spoke and to this day I have never seen her again.

I am sure that I will never be able to say that I lived a life without any regrets. Who can? Some of the events are beyond our control and others we could have changed. In either case, regrets are regrets and I regret never having known my sister.