

“I CAN DREAM AGAIN” CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

CHAPTER 7 – JIMMY JACK, WHEN ARE YOU COMING BACK?

The Gang Grows

When I returned from Florida, my appetite for action was on fire. Jimmy Jack was back and worse than ever. As my dad began to recover from the shock treatments, it placed him in an almost comatose state and I had no supervision.

Helping me hold things together was Billy. We were like twins. Whatever I did, he did. And whatever he did, I did. This was the “James Gang,” a bunch of wanna-bes with five daily priorities. Every 24 hours needed to have time for girls, drugs, breaking the law, a fight, and playing basketball.

A Rampage of Robbery

My ninth grade year was explosive with a higher level of violence and thievery to support my growing addiction to drugs and alcohol. When my homeboys and I finished building our clubhouse, E-14, it became our home for our sexual pleasures, getting high, and planning our next robbery. We quickly went from robbing rolls and milk at 4 a.m. from the local delicatessens to robbing houses.

We went on a rampage of robbery. We even robbed our girlfriends’ houses when their parents were away. Our girlfriends told us when their families went away. Within minutes of them leaving for vacation, we would break in and tear their homes apart looking for money.

My friends continued killing themselves. Danny was one of my buddies that I often got high with. He jumped off the 85th floor of the Empire State Building and ended his misery. Another friend took a double-barrel shotgun and shot himself in the chest. Another jumped in front of a racing train on the Long Island Railroad. Many others overdosed on drugs.

Dangling in the Balance of Life and Death

I saw the Brown Derby, a gun-slinging, knife-throwing bar that I would never go to in my right mind. But that night I was out of mind. I only had \$2 in my pocket, but I was determined to buy a drink to forget my misery.

I boldly walked into the bar and said to the bartender, “Give me straight vodka, no ice.” I clearly remember guzzling the vodka down, frustrated because I felt my life was over. Darkness surrounded me and I knew something desperate was going to happen. I thought I would probably end up in prison, hurt someone else, be badly hurt, or even killed that night.