

Allen Cunningham

My parents met at Baylor University in the early forties, when World War II broke out my dad answered the call and left school going into the army Air Force where he was trained as a pilot and flew the China-Burma-India route. He crashed and broke his back which plagued him all his life. I have one sister who was born in 1942, and I was born in 1946 in Waco Texas.

After the war he went to Israel to train pilots for the newly created country and went on to fly El Al Airlines to Israel out of New York. My parents divorced around 1950, he married an Israeli woman and my mother took my sister and I to California. While singing at the Beverly Hills Hotel she caught the eye of a man named Harold Chiles who was a casting director in the new industry of television. They married and we settled in the San Fernando valley of Southern California.

He was the casting director for Republic studios in Studio City for a lot of the early TV shows like Superman, Lassie and Fury. George Reeves who my father cast for the role of Superman, constantly complained and blamed my father that he had been typecast and couldn't get any more work in TV. Some theories are that his failed career led to suicide, and my father carried that guilt for many years.

In the summer of 1966, I got a letter from the draft telling me to report to the Induction center in L.A. and rather than being drafted I signed up for an extra year to be able to pick my specialty and I chose medics.

After boot camp at Fort Ord and medical training at Fort Sam Houston I was sent off to Vietnam where I spent a year. After Vietnam back in L.A. I was very directionless, addicted to drugs I went to a treatment center which didn't help so I went back in the military this time the Navy. While in the Navy and still addicted to drugs in 1978 I turned my life over to God who redeemed me. My life changed drastically after that and when I got out of the Navy I settled in San Diego and got a master's degree from USC, got married and went into the software/IT industry.

In 1996 we moved to Sonoma County where my wife was from originally. A couple of years later I found out that I had Hepatitis C from my prior drug use that I never knew about. In 2004 I underwent a living donor transplant at UCSF when my brother-in-law offered to give me half of his liver and we both have been doing great for the last 22 years.

A few years ago, my wife started showing symptoms and then was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. It's been a difficult time, but we now have a full-time caregiver who's been a big help and we are confident that God will get us through this like everything else in our marriage.