**Menu**

[**Earl Knightwood**](https://earlknightwood.wordpress.com/)

[**Junior Beaumont, Public Relations Manager**](https://earlknightwood.wordpress.com/2011/12/27/junior-beaumont-public-relations-manager/)

October 30, 2011
I called the folks at CBS’ 60 Minutes, and told them about an elusive singer/songwriter who shuns publicity, rarely does interviews, and might be coming to see us in the Fall. They had no interest at all in doing a segment on him. That is, until I told them I was talking about Earl Knightwood. Suddenly, both Leslie Stahl and Scott Pelley were on the phone at the same time and fighting over who would get to handle the interview. I settled it by telling them that they could share the interview. Out of fairness to Earl, I insisted on getting a list of questions in advance that they would be asking him. Here are the questions that they have submitted to me so far.

1. Mr. Knightwood, who were your earliest musical influences?
2. Do you think that being arrested for armed bank robbery at the age of 7 changed your life outlook any?
3. Did your subsequent 20-year stretch in San Quentin influence the musical direction you took?
4. What is your favorite snack food?
5. In the early 1950’s, you were driving a truck at the same Tupelo company where Elvis worked. Is it true that he stole your entire act, including the phrase, ‘Thank you, Ma’am’ ?
 6. What is your favorite color?
7. At last year’s Grammy awards, you arrived with Dolly Parton but left with Lady Gaga. Do you feel any blame for the resulting cat fight between the two in which Miss Parton tossed a 5 gallon can of gasoline on Gaga in the parking lot?
8. Also, on the same subject, does your exit at the Grammys with Gaga signal another change in your musical direction?
9. What is your favorite cartoon show?
10. How come you and Ed Vallee have never been seen together in public at the same time???

[**Earl Knightwood Fan Club**](https://earlknightwood.wordpress.com/2011/12/27/earl-knightwood-fan-club/)

Odell Washington, President
Earl Knightwood Fan Club

We are now offering a full line of Earl Knightwood collectables, including Earl beer mugs, Earl fuzzy dice, Earl t-shirts and boxer shorts, Earl figurines, Earl Nascar race helmets, and coming in 2012, a full line of Earl Knightwood molasses, chili, and crawdad flavored canned beans

[**Earl Knightwood – The Origin of the Knightwood name**](https://earlknightwood.wordpress.com/2011/12/27/earl-knightwood-the-origin-of-the-knightwood-name/)

The Knightwood name is an ancient Saxon one, with its roots going back to The Battle of Hastings in 1066. Conventional steel armor for knights was expensive and time-consuming to make. The legend goes that one day, the village idiot of Chichester was fooling around in his garage and came up with a prototype suit of plywood armor. Initially laughed at and scorned, his plywood armor eventually caught on, proving to be a lot warmer than a steel suit in the winter months. Unfortunately, there were a few minor draw backs, including being easily set on fire by the enemy’s flaming arrows. England’s King Harold II was wearing a suit of plywood armor during the Battle of Hastings. After he was hit by a flaming Norman arrow, he lit up like a roman candle and was last seen making tracks for the river. As a result of Harold’s wearing a suit of wooden armor, the battle was lost and William of Normandy became ruler of England. Hence, plywood armor was to be ever after known as Knight’s wood, a term denoting stupidity, and the Chichester neighbors of the village idiot started calling him the same.

[**Earl Knightwood**](https://earlknightwood.wordpress.com/2011/12/27/earl-knightwood/)

Providence Sunday Journal Dec.18. (AP)

**ANNUAL KNIGHTWOOD CHRISTMAS TOUR SUDDENLY CANCELED**

The 23rd Annual Earl Knightwood R.I. Christmas Tour kicked into high gear yesterday when Earl, dressed as Santa, hopped off of a helicopter in the Warwick Mall parking lot. After passing out presents to children of all ages, Earl climbed back into the chopper and headed out for his next stop, the R.I. State Girls Reformatory School in Cranston. Witness accounts vary widely as to what happened next. The head mistress of the reformatory, Emma Crum, claims she overheard Earl telling the inmates that Santa had a special present for all the girls this year, and a guard reportedly saw Earl trying to stuff two inmates into his bag. At press time, our phone calls to Mr. Knightwood’s manager, Ed Vallee, have gone unanswered.

[**Earl Knightwood – Broken G String, A Sorta True Story Of My Life**](https://earlknightwood.wordpress.com/2011/12/27/earl-knightwood-broken-g-string-a-sorta-true-story-of-my-life/)

Genre
Hometown Blues
Biography
BROKEN G-STRING
A Sorta True Story of my Life

by Earl Knightwood as told to Arturo Valejo

Excerpts from the dust jacket blurb:

“An American legend.” – Bill Clinton.

“Is he taken?” – Kim Kardashian.

“No fair. His brain is bigger than mine.” – George W. Bush.

“Three words: musical genius!” – Ed Vallee.

“He’s a warped and pathetic little slug who never grew up.” – (ex-wives Kandi, Tiffani, Brandi, Traci, Barbi, Lingerie, Krystal, Simone, and Schiltz Knightwood)

“Earl Knightwood is an enigma, wrapped in a riddle, with a piece of toilet paper stuck to his left shoe.” – Stanley Jackson (Earl’s probation officer; 1976-1980, 1983-1992, 1997-2004)

REPORT THIS AD

“Earl introduced me to my husband. He also bought me a Gucci handbag and I don’t really care what the people say. I know it’s real.” – Paula Vallee.

**Forword**
My journey into the dark, unknown regions of the man called Earl Knightwood began with a phone call at 3AM. He had decided to set the record straight. He was sick and tired of opening up The National Enquirer and reading about his being raised by wolves or being the secret love-child of Mamie Eisenhower and Richard Nixon.
If I was to do this man’s biography justice, I told him would have to know everything, and I wanted the truth, or the deal was off.
“The truth?”, he responded. “You can’t handle the truth, but I’ll give it to you anyway.”
There are certain things God does not want us to know, and what makes Earl Knightwood tick is one of them. I never found the answer. Thank God, because I don’t think I could handle it.

Preface
I first met Earl in 1981 at Riker’s Island. I went down there to bail out a client, and ended up posting bail for Earl as well. He quickly skipped town and I didn’t see him again until the Grammy Awards last year. He had been nominated for his latest album, ‘Loose Shoes and a Warm Place to Shit’. I spent the next three weeks trying to break through his multiple layers of assistants, yes-men, and agents. I was determined to get my $50 back, but all I kept getting was the run-around. Then one night, the phone rang at 3 AM.

It was Earl. He told me he had meant to pay me back, but couldn’t find me (even though at that time I was running a full-page color ad on the back cover of Blues Guitarist Weekly).

‘We have to meet”, Earl whispered. “Barney’s Beanery at noon.”

Before I could tell him I wanted my money, he hung up. My only recourse now was to meet up with this deadbeat. My head hit the pillow. I fell asleep with no inkling of how drastic our meeting would impact my life. Earl Knightwood had decided to write his autobiography and he needed help. The meeting at Barney’s would be the first of many over the next year in which Earl spilled his guts out to me. I learned of the women, the drugs, the booze, and the biggest and most well-kept secret of his life: a nightmarish addiction to Yoo-Hoo and Ring Dings, which almost destroyed his career.

My first question was why? Why was he spilling his guts to me? His reply was as direct and honest as the man himself:

“I’m behind in child support and alimony”.

“How far behind?”, I asked.

“6 years”, came the timid reply.

“6 years? You haven’t paid your ex-wife alimony or child support for 6 years?”

“Well, it’s actually 3 wives. And, uh, I think it’s maybe closer to 9 years”.

“9 years? You haven’t paid in 9 years?”

“It could be 10 years”.

I was about to become the first person Earl Knightwood ever revealed his inner self to, outside of a midget stripper in a Cleveland motel room. But unlike the stripper, I did not earn Earl’s trust immediately. For example, I had to pretend not to notice him following me around day in and day out in his fire engine red 1956 Oldsmobile Rocket 88 with the Nixon bumper sticker. When I confronted him, he denied it was him and said there were probably thousands of other red ’56 Rocket 88’s in the area with Nixon bumper stickers.

When I told him that Nixon had been dead for 15 years, he shot out one of my tires with a .357 Magnum that he said was a gift from Elvis.

Well, this was America’s biggest living musical legend, so I guess he had earned the right to have one or two peccadilloes. But delving into
the mind of this icon soon turned out to be an experience not unlike the scene in Raiders of the Lost Ark when the Nazis opened the Ark lid.

At the time, I did not realize that there are pieces of Earl that should never be exposed to the light of day.

I begin here with that caveat in mind.

Arturo Valejo
*- in hiding, somewhere in the south of France
2011*

 **INTRODUCTION**
The Knightwood name is an ancient Saxon one, with its roots going back to The Battle of Hastings in 1066. Conventional steel armor for knights was expensive and time-consuming to make. The legend goes that one day, the village idiot of Chichester was fooling around in his garage and came up with a prototype suit of plywood armor. Initially laughed at and scorned, his plywood armor eventually caught on, proving to be a lot warmer than a steel suit in the winter months. Unfortunately, there were a few minor draw backs, including being easily set on fire by the enemy’s flaming arrows. England’s King Harold II was wearing a suit of plywood armor during the Battle of Hastings. After he was hit by a flaming Norman arrow, he lit up like a roman candle and was last seen making tracks for the river. As a result of Harold’s wearing a suit of wooden armor, the battle was lost and William of Normandy became ruler of England. Hence, plywood armor was to be ever after known as Knight’s wood, a term denoting stupidity, and the Chichester neighbors of the village idiot started calling him the same.

**CHAPTER 1
THE BIRTH OF EARL**

-Spirit enters flesh
and for all it’s worth
charges into Earth
in birth after birth
ever fresh and fresh.
-Robert Frost

-“Sometimes the baby should be
thrown out with the bath water.”
-Earl’s mother

Earl:
“I more or less had an idyllic, normal childhood. I grew up in an apartment over my family’s Chinese Laundry. Doesn’t everybody?”

The story of Earl Knightwood began at midnight, April 1, 1951, in small, dusty, Knightwood, West Virginia, a town named for his ancestors. It wasn’t always known as Knightwood. Until 1835, it was known throughout the county as ‘LowTide’. After the notorious Pig Slush Dam Collapse of that year, the townspeople all evacuated. All, that is, except the Knightwood clan.

According to Dr. Elmer ‘Scabby’ Johnson, Earl’s was not an easy childbirth.

*(Author’s Note: ‘Doc’ Johnson was interviewed for this book shortly before his death. Unfortunately, there is no one alive who can collaborate or refute what he told me)*

Doc Johnson:
“Do I remember when Earl was born? Of course, I do, Sonny. It was back in ’51. The first contraceptive pill had just come on the market, and after taking one look at Earl, I remember regretting not slipping one into his mother’s scotch and soda.

Earl:
– “I didn’t realize that ‘Knightwood’s Chinese Laundry’ was just a front for my daddy’s still until it blew up one morning and leveled half the town.”

After the family still blew up in 1961, the operation was moved to the woods outside of town where it remains to this day, operated by Earl’s older cousin, Merle Knightwood.

Merle took over the operation in 1961 after his return from a hitch in the army, stationed in Germany, where he and Elvis Presley served together in a tank battalion. According to Merle, the maneuver scenes in the movie “G.I. Blues” features Merle and Elvis in the lead tank.

*(Author’s note: Shortly after my interview with Merle Knightwood, his still blew up, and so far, Merle is still missing. Unfortunately, there is no one alive who can collaborate or refute what he told me)*

Merle Knightwood:

– “Me and Elvis didn’t know the cameras were still rolling when we detoured into Scheinhaven looking for girls. You ever tried to get laid in a tank, boy? It ain’t easy.
Well, anyway, after we both got out of the army, Elvis used to stop by every once and a while when he was on the road. He was always asking me to join some crime family he was running called The Memphis Mafia I think, but I told him I had my hands full running the family still.
Elvis was the one who gave Earl his first guitar and singing lessons. Little Earl was about 10 years old and Elvis became his roll model. The week Jailhouse Rock came to the Knightwood Bijou, Earl packed a suitcase filled with possum sandwiches and sat through 38 showings. Yep, Earl idolized Elvis the way younger kids idolize Earl today. He walked around in engineer boots, rolled-up cuffs on his dungarees, painted-on sideburns and two quarts of axle grease in his hair.”

Until, that is, Earl discovered The Blues.

**CHAPTER 2**

**NEW ORLEANS: THE EARLY YEARS**

Earl:
“I was 11 when the revenuers came and locked up Daddy, so it was now up to me to provide for the family. Since the only thing I knew how to do was play guitar and sing, I went out on the road in front of our house and stuck my thumb out. I figured if I could make it in New York, I could make it anywhere. Little did I know, my little bastard cousin Bertie got wind of my plan and then went out and turned all the road signs around and I ended up in New Orleans. I must have played in the house bands of every bar and brothel from Basin Street to West End Boulevard, but I also got to meet and play with all the great ones, from Leroy No-liver Lacey to Willie One-kidney Wilson. Some of those guys made me feel a little uneasy the way they eyed me, especially the ones with missing body organs. I learned what I could from them as fast as I could and got out of town even faster. Next stop: Chicago, and I hoped the musicians in The Windy City weren’t missing so many parts.”

 **CHAPTER 3
CHICAGO**

“They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I
have seen your painted women under the gas lamps
luring the farm boys.”
– Chicago, by Carl Sandburg

Earl:
“I fell in love for the first time in Chicago. She was also dating a whole bunch of guys named John. She was a virgin, and her mother back in Schenectady needed an operation so I used to give her my paycheck every week.

After 3 months in Chicago, Earl had seen it all, and decided it was time to move on. A few months here, a few months there, Earl was seeing the world, and what a world it was. Especially New York.

 **CHAPTER 4
EARL, THE FOLKSINGER**

Earl:

“The hootenanny crowd really cracked me up, I loved the folk singers a lot. I used to sit and jam with lots of cats down in Washington Square, including Dylan. Of course, he was unknown back then, and couldn’t really play that good, so I showed him a few chords.”

Bob Dylan:

“Yeah, I know how much the world worships Earl Knightwood, but I’ve seen the man up close, and it ain’t a pretty sight. In the early days, we were living together in a cold water flat down in Soho. We were always cold and hungry. One day I came home and found him eating my shoes. I can still see him, sitting there with that stupid grin on his face, wiping Tabasco sauce off his face, and offering me a bite of my own shoes. He was one strange dude, especially since I knew he had just picked up his food stamps that morning. When I asked him what happened to the food stamps, he just pointed out the window and mumbled something about them blowing in the wind. He was always cryptic that way. I never knew what the hell he was talking about. And he was always trickin’ me.”

“He was teaching me new chords and I wondered for over 5 months why I kept getting booed and kicked off the stage. Then I realized Earl was just making these chords up.”

Earl:

“Yeah, Dylan didn’t have much of a sense of humor, and I guess that’s part of the reason I kept fucking with him. My favorite was to tell him that his agent just called and said he had a gig for him at a funeral somewhere out of town, like Poughkeepsie, and the family of the deceased wanted him to show up at graveside and sing Memphis Blues Again or A Hard Rain’s Gonna Fall. I gotta tell ya, I used to follow him just to watch the expressions on the faces of some grieving family when Bob started singing in that voice of his. But the amazing thing was that Bob fell for it every time.”

 “Sometimes Dylan and I would do a gig together at Cafe Wha?. This was way back before it became a tourist rip-off. Well, one night after the break, I hid Bob’s guitar on him when he went to the can, so I did my solo act while he turned the place upside down. I’m up there on that little stage doing my Earl thing and in walks John Hammond. Mr. Hammond walks up to me at the end of the night and hands me his card.
“I’m getting a group together to tour England, kid. Give me a call if you’re interested”.

**CHAPTER 5
“ALL YOU NEED IS EARL”**

Winter, 1962. London, England

Just about everyone who was someone was on that tour. Brenda Lee, Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, Gene Pitney, etc.
For some reason, though, perhaps because Hammond was a notorious cheapskate, he always booked one less room than was needed, and being the unknown, unimportant nobody on the tour, Earl was always the one who would be found the next morning curled up sleeping in an alley with yesterday’s Daily Mail over his head. Until, that is, he caught Brenda Lee’s eye. From then on, they were an item. Rumor had it that Brenda had fallen hopelessly, head-over-heals in love with him, although most everyone else on the tour suspected he was just using her for room service and a warm place to shit.

CHUCK BERRY :

“You want me to tell you what I think about Earl Knightwood? Listen, Sonny, there ain’t enough hours in the day to tell you what I think of Earl.
Yeah, for years I’ve taken heat for stealing Earl’s duck walk and it was the biggest mistake of my life. No one could do it as good as Earl, I’ll admit that. But he cleaned me out in a crap game with loaded dice once while we were on tour in England, and I vowed to get even. Then later, near the end of that tour, he borrows $200 from me, and disappears the next day. You tell Earl I ain’t forgot it, neither.”

JERRY LEE LEWIS :

“I remember being on tour in England with Earl back in the early years. I was dating my 7 year-old cousin at the time, and sometimes we’d double-date with Earl and Brenda Lee. Man, that woman had it bad for Earl. ”

BRENDA LEE :

“I’m sorry. I don’t remember anyone named Earl Knightwood. Yes, I toured England back in 1962, but I don’t remember anyone by that name, so don’t ask me again. Sure, there was a guy I had a small crush on while on tour, but I dated plenty of guys. Earl Knightwood? Nope, never heard of him. I would have remembered the name if I knew him, especially if he broke my heart and didn’t even leave me a good-bye note when he snuck out early one morning. And if he used my credit card to buy a new Fender Stratocaster. And knocked me up.”

Earl :

” I was on tour in England, and was in a music shop one day buying a Fender Stratocaster. A distinguished-looking guy comes up to me and asks me if I know how to play that thing, because if I did, he could use me the next day. So I got up real early the next morning, kissed Brenda on the cheek, and tipped-toed out the door. I knew how much she needed her beauty sleep. Next thing I know, I’m on the front step of some music studio on Abbey Road. The guy from the music store jumps out, grabs my arm, and says ‘You’re late, come on in. I’m recording this band inside, but I don’t think their guitar player can handle it.” Then I follow him into a small recording room where four guys are sitting around waiting. He goes up to one of the band members and whispers in his ear, “John, George is out. This is Earl. Earl is all you need.”
I guess you might say the rest is history. Yep, I was the one playing lead guitar on The Beatles first album.”

Brian Epstein:

“I remember in the early years, the Fab Four almost became famous to the world at-large as ‘John, Paul, Earl, and Ringo”. George Martin didn’t think Harrison was good enough to record with the others, so he enlisted the help of a 12 year-old American guitar prodigy who happened to be on tour in England at the time.”

*(Author’s Note – From an interview with Mr. Epstein, publication unknown, graciously forwarded to the author by Mr. Knightwood.)*

George Martin:

“Earl playing on the Beatles first album? No, but I did once use him on a recording with a British polka band. I think it sold 4 copies.”

**CHAPTER 6
THE SULLIVAN YEARS**– “Tell me, Connie, is your mother still dead?” -Ed Sullivan, talking to Connie Francis.

The Spring of 1963 found Earl Knightwood back in New York, drifting from one gig to another. Fame was not entirely fleeting, however. According to a TV Guide listing in June of that year, Earl made his first appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show.

Ed Sullivan:

“Back in ’63, we had The Earl Knightwood Blues Band on the show, and when they finished their performance, I motioned for Earl to come over so I could shake his hand and get him some more audience applause. He stumbled and lurked forward, and threw up all over my new Dolce and Gabbana suit. I told him he would never do the Sullivan Show again, and I never forgot his reply: ‘I’ve just done the Sullivan Show, and I’ll be back’.

I closed my final show in 1971 with Topo Gigio. That night Topo rubbed up against me and said, ‘Eddie, keesa me goo’night’. So what the hell, I thought, and I bent over and kissed the little rat. Just then I heard a familiar voice behind the black curtain laughing his ass off. I pulled back the curtain and standing there with his hand up the rat’s ass was Earl Knightwood.

For years, that reply he had given me back in ’63 haunted me. And now, in the last act of my last show, Earl Knightwood shows up.” I was hospitalized for chest pains later that evening, and spent 3 weeks in intensive care.”

Earl :

“Yeah, well, Ed wasn’t exactly known for a sense of humor, was he? And I’m sure he neglected to tell you that on the night he was rushed to the ICU, me, Topo, Jackie Mason, and the girl who was the knife thrower’s assistant grabbed a cab and followed the ambulance to Roosevelt Hospital. I don’t remember too much about the ride, except for Jackie sitting there talking to Topo as if he was real, and when we got to the hospital, Mason pretended he left his wallet back in the green room, leaving me and Topo to pay the fare.”

Jackie Mason :

“Yeah, I sat there and talked to the mouse, alright. So what? He’s got family back in Tel Aviv. What else were the two of us supposed to do? Knightwood had some half-naked bleeding bimbo sitting on his lap making out like there was no tomorrow. Nine months to the day, she gave birth to a baby boy. I hear they named it Ed.”

Earl :
“Oh yeah, now I remember. That was the night I met my first wife, Kandi Abramovitz. We named our first kid Ed Sullivan Knightwood.
Ed sued”
 **CHAPTER 7**

**EARL SERVES HIS COUNTRY**

“Heck, I’ll get three square meals a day, a roof over my head and a nice rifle that shoots a NATO round.  What more could a boy from Kentucky ask for?”

– Earl Knightwood, after opening his draft notice

In 1969, Earl Knightwood received the same draft notice in the mail that thousands of others had also found in their mailbox, and if the army was good enough for Elvis, it was good enough for Earl. He packed a bag and his cousin Merle drove him down to the Knightwood induction center. Before Earl got out of the car, Merle gave him valuable advice to heed while in the service of his country: “Don’t fuck no fat chicks, Earl. Remember. You’re a Knightwood.”

At the induction center, Earl was told to raise his right hand (although fellow draftee Alvin ‘Buck’ Bodine swears he remembers seeing Earl raise his left) and proceeded to take the oath to defend the Constitution of the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic. From there, the group of 7 boys from Knightwood took the Trailways bus to the big induction center in Lexington, and along with 50 or so other inductees from around the state, expected to be bussed off to Ft. Bragg for basic army training.

EARL : “I remember this big army sergeant coming into the induction room at Lexington, all in a huff about something, and then telling us to line up. He ordered every 7th guy to step forward. I was one of them. Then he said, ‘Congratulations. You guys just volunteered for the United States Marine Corps. They’re running low on warm bodies.’ I never forgot his next words: ‘Have fun.’ ”

 **CHAPTER 8**

**PARRIS ISLAND, S.C.**

“The Marines I have seen have the filthiest minds, the highest morale,
and the lowest morals of any group of animals I have ever seen.
Thank God for the United States Marine Corps.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady of the United States, 1945.

Earl :

“So instead of being sent to Ft. Bragg for boot camp, I found myself on a plane bound for Parris Island, S.C. There’s nothing I can add to what other people have already said about P.I. It was 8 weeks of pure hell. Well, actually seven weeks of pure hell. We spent one week on mess duty at the women Marines mess hall. I had 3 jobs while on mess duty: clean off the tables, take the trays back from the girls, and take out the garbage cans and empty them in the dumpster out back. This is where I met Mary Lou Beasley. Mary Lou was a Georgia girl who joined the Marine Corps because she had longed for a pair of combat boots since she was 6 years old. She also had never dated anyone back home with the sophistication we Kentucky boys had, so I can easily see how much I must have impressed her.

We met in the usual place young lovers who are privates in the U.S.M.C. always meet: in back of the mess hall dumpster. During our dogs-in-heat moments, she told me she loved me, and said she would always wait for me. I mumbled back something similar. Before I knew it, my week on mess duty was over, and I never saw Mary Lou again, except for one night when I was on my way to sick bay to see if I could get some pain killers. I had fallen off the 45-foot rappelling wall the day before and broke both legs, an arm, my neck, all ten fingers, four ribs and my funny bone. I also crushed 7 or 8 vertebrae in my back, but who’s counting. Other than that, my D.I. said I was fine, but being the saint he was, he let me go to sick bay, anyway. As I crawled past the women’s mess hall, I heard a familiar voice groaning from the dumpster area, “I love you, Melvin, and I’ll wait for you always”.

**CHAPTER 9
HILL 25 - SOUTH OF DANANG, SOUTH VIETNAM, 1969**

“Well, come on, all you big strong men,
Uncle Sam needs your help again.
He’s got himself in a terrible jam
Way down yonder in Vietnam
So put down your books and pick up a gun,
We’re gonna have a whole lot of fun.”

– Country Joe and the Fish.

Earl :

“We landed at the airbase in Danang and were herded into a big transit building where we were met by a truck. Someone at transit told us we were on our way to a place named Hill 25, but the corporal who drove the truck said we were on our way into Indian country. This totally confused me, because I thought we had already beat the Indians and set them up in the casino business out in the Connecticut woods. In fact, I knew this had to be true, because my band had played there once.

When we got to Hill 25, we were shown where to get our 782 gear, and within days, I soon found out why they called the area ‘Indian country”.

I’m going to jump ahead here, because it took me a while to get used to Vietnam, the heat, booby traps, and not knowing if my old band was running off to play Vegas in monkey suits while I sat in a night ambush trying to stay awake. After 6 months of this, a sniper from the hill said he would help me get into sniper school if I wanted. Why he approached me is still a mystery today. He was a surfer from southern California, and I listened to him talk about surfing and sniping as if they were the same thing. This was a very strange cat, I thought. All I wanted to do was get home in one piece, get the band back together, and get laid, and this guy sounded like he’d like to stay here indefinitely and kill people. I politely declined, and I never saw him again. Then one day soon after my brief encounter with him, I heard that surfer-sniper boy had been in a whorehouse in Dogpatch outside of DaNang, when someone tossed a grenade into the room, killing both him and the girl he was with. We held a company formation and they awarded him a purple heart posthumously.

Right around this time, I had enough time in-country to go on R and R, so me and Red Preston put in for a week in Japan. I think he may have picked up the nickname ‘Red’ because of his bright red hair and Yosemite Sam handlebar mustache, but I’m not really sure. He was a quiet guy.”

**CHAPTER 10
R AND R IN JAPAN**

“You can bet the Nips ain’t sleeping tonight”.

– John Wayne, in The Sands of Iwo Jima.

“I don’t remember, but the place was crawling with Japs”.

– Earl Knightwood, when asked upon his return to Hill 25
what country he visited on his R & R.

Earl :

“I don’t remember sleeping during the whole week we were in Japan. Me and Red picked up cute little things every night. On the last night, we were in this beautiful hotel that was full of flowers and smelled real good, and like everywhere in Japan, you had to leave your shoes at the front door. Anyway, I’m in my room with a girl whose name, believe it or not, was Trixie, and she had some great pills. To this day, I don’t know what they were, but if she’s reading this, I’d like to place an order. We were fooling around for awhile, and then Trixie asked me if she could invite her sister over. After spending about 2 seconds thinking this over, I reluctantly agreed. You have to remember that I was 18 years old, 10,000 miles from Kentucky, and chances weren’t that good that I’d ever get back alive. So Trixie called her ‘sister’ and she turns out to be even cuter than Trixie!

It must have been around 11PM when the local Japanese news and weather came on TV. I’m laying there watching this guy with a pointer, pointing at a map of Japan and telling me what the weather was going to be the next day, and then suddenly, some kind of epiphany hit me on the head like a brick, and I’m understanding Japanese. Shortly after this, when Gunsmoke comes on, there’s a knock on my door. I’m thinking to myself, ‘Jeepers, I don’t know anyone in Japan’, so I call out, ‘Who is it?’, and I hear Red outside my door say, ‘Pack it up, Earl, we’re leaving.’ I looked over to my left at Trixie, and then to my right at her ‘sister’, and told Red, ‘Over my dead body’.

Well, Red must have been doing something across the hall that was just a little bit too strange even for his date. She told him she was going down to get some clean towels.

Not only did she not come back, she also took his shoes on her way out the door so he couldn’t follow her.

He was a quiet guy.”

 **CHAPTER 11**

**Earl and Squeaky, Sitting in a Tree…**

Earl :

“When I finally left Vietnam for good, we came back home as a complete unit by ship. We ran into a typhoon off Japan, and had to ride it out for 4 days. I opened the hatch door to the head, and with nothing but flip-flops on, stepped into 10 inches of backed-up shit, piss, toilet paper, and a nice hefty serving of vomit to top it off with. I knew I was going to die. I stood there as the ship rolled, holding onto a pole, puking my guts out along with everyone else.

Everyone else in Vietnam went home the quick clean way, by plane, but Nixon wanted a photo opportunity at the docks in San Diego, and what better way to show the folks in middle America that he was reducing the number of troops in Vietnam than by having an entire Marine unit walking down a gangplank on the evening news.

We were then quickly hustled onto buses and sent out into the middle of the desert to a place called 29 Palms. I was there for two weeks before I was discharged. On the day I said good bye to the Marine Corps, six of us jumped into a big old green ’61 Pontiac and headed for the LA airport. Half-way through the desert, right smack dab in the exact middle of nowhere, a girl wearing skimpy cut-off shorts and what looked like half a blouse, stood hitchhiking. We stopped, I opened my door, she climbed in, and she sat on my lap. But just then, up from behind some rocks pops a little scuzzy guy with long hair and an even longer buck knife. The car had no air conditioning, but even with every window rolled down, the two of them stunk real bad in the desert heat, maybe even worse than a backed-up toilet on a troop ship, and I also think the girl may have peed her pants while she was sitting on me. We stopped to gas up, and when the two of them went inside to get candy bars, we left them there, along with a smoking strip of rubber 300 feet long.

I was back home in Knightwood, when two weeks later, I saw the little scuzzy guy on the nightly news. He was being led handcuffed into a California courtroom with a big smile on his face, charged with multiple murders, including that of Sharon Tate. The girl sitting on my lap on the day I was discharged from the United States Marine Corps was none other than Squeaky Fromme. My take on the whole thing was that Charlie and Squeaky were going to carve someone up on that desert road, rob him, and steal his car. Instead, a car with six recently discharged marines stopped for Chuck and The Squeakster that day. What makes the story more interesting is that in the trunk was a seabag filled with Chinese-made AK-47 and SKS assault rifles, a 60mm mortar, grenades, ammo, and a handfull of U.S.M.C. bayonets. God works in mysterious ways.”

*(Author’s Note - In a 2009 interview, shortly after her release from prison, Miss Fromme mentioned the incident to Barbara Walters when asked if there was any day in her life that stood out from the rest.)*

Miss Fromme :

“There are certain things in this world you remember for the rest of your life, and the day back in 1969 when a green 1961 Pontiac loaded with marines stopped and picked me and Charlie up is at the top of my list. It was the most wonderful day of my life. I got in that car and sat on some guy’s lap and immediately fell in love with him. I could tell he was also in love with me. I spent the next 6 months walking up and down every desert road in California looking for that green Pontiac, but never found it. If anyone knows who or where he is, please contact me.”

**CHAPTER 12
The Post-War Years**

**MOTOWN EARL**

“A B C, It’s easy as

1, 2, 3, as simple as

do, re, mi, A B C, 1, 2, 3

baby you and me.”

– from The Jackson Five song ‘A, B, C’,

Earl’s favorite lyrics of all-time,
and the inspiration for his own hit song, “D, E, F”.

Earl :

“It was good to be back home, but now I had to get my career back on track, and I knew it wasn’t going to be easy. Musical tastes had changed, and if I was going to survive, I was going to have to change with them. I called up my old agent. He said he might have a temporary gig for me working with an upcoming Motown group called The Jackson Five. Jermaine was out with a bad cold, and they needed to find a replacement for him real quick. They were scheduled to do the Sullivan Show on Christmas Eve. I took the job. Ed introduced us to his audience as Tito, Marlon, Randy, Michael, and Earl Jackson. I might be wrong here, but I think I was the one who got the biggest applause, so after the show, I suggested to Mr. Jackson that he shit-can the little one and hire me full-time. ”

(TO BE CONTINUED)