

24 Tales Of Mystery and Wonder

Robert R. Railey

Other books by Robert R. Railey

**"Chicago P. D., Homicide by Robert R. Railey."
published by Biblio Publishing**

"New Poetry Robert R. Railey," published by Biblio Publishing

**"Derek Christian Antichrist by Robert R. Railey," published by
Biblio Publishing**

**"Thirty-One Short Stories by Robert R. Railey,"
The above book was published by Amazon Books on
November 8, 2020**

ISBN: 978-1-62249-577-1

**Publishing by
Biblio Publishing
Columbus, Ohio
BiblioPublishing.com**

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Derek Christian, Antichrist

Part One

Prologue

“At the time of the end”

"In one instant, the sky will open up to reveal multiple shafts of fire and terrifying bolts of lightning which will emanate downward from the heavens. And from that time on, the average person will know that the time of the ancient Biblical Prophecy of Armageddon is upon us; and we will also know that the Earth will be consumed by fire."

But before the nations of Gog and Magog can be destroyed in the apocalyptic battle, and well before Satan and the False Prophet can be thrown in a 'bottomless pit' for a thousand years, the people on Earth must first endure the second half of "The Tribulation."

It has been written that the first half of the seven years of "The Tribulation" will afford the people on Earth a full three and one-half years of unprecedented peace and prosperity. We have also been told that during the second half of The Tribulations we will see war and pestilence not seen since the Biblical days.

Nowadays, the nagging question on many people's minds is just exactly how the true believers will be able to spot the Antichrist. Regrettably, this might not be an easy task for us to achieve; and that's simply because it's very doubtful that the Antichrist will show up sporting horns that protrude from his head; nor, will he most likely be dragging around a long tail. It has been said, however, that we will know him by his deeds.

Though in recent times more than a few people around the world have come to believe that the previously unknown preacher from the Western Kentucky area, who'd just recently been recognized as being the absolute ruler of the televangelists, might just be the Antichrist.

Chapter One

Within a few short years following the last battle of the American Revolution, the wilderness tract of land known as Kentucky would officially become the fifteenth state of the newly formed United States of America; and since Kentucky lay directly to the west of Virginia, some of the men who'd fought in America's War of Independence were given sizable land grants in the new state in lieu of payments for fighting on the line.

But during those early pioneer days there were very few courts of law to be found anywhere in the state of Kentucky; and the U. S. Military posts were even more scarce which left the early settlers of the region no choice then but to resort to the only type of law that was readily available to them; and which then meant that frontier justice would have to prevail.

So, for that reason it wasn't unusual for the different groups of vigilantes to have to expel the violent and the antisocial individuals from their frontier communities; and on certain other occasions it even became necessary for them to hang somebody.

Consequently, then, myriads of myths and legends have greatly abounded concerning the early frontier days in Kentucky. And in a film from yesteryear, which was titled "How the west was won," there was one scene filmed in the Western Kentucky area that quite accurately depicted a notorious family of river pirates that made its living by robbing and killing the unassuming and trusting boaters who were traversing the Ohio River. Thus, after having practiced their murderous ways of luring the people into their lair the killers would then dump their victim's bodies down in a deep hole in the floor of a cave which was in the side of the riverbank.

That same part of Western Kentucky was also home to the infamous Harp brothers and their brother in-law, who just happened to be the duly elected Sheriff of the district, but who was also the leader of a real-life gang of murdering thieves that robbed and killed the people living in the Western Kentucky communities; until, that is, when the vigilantes and the local militia made the fateful decision to put a stop to it.

And as it's been previously noted in some of the published accounts of the aforementioned incident, the militiamen proceeded to shoot and kill the renegade Sheriff as he sat comfortably in a chair in the gang's ferry office on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River. Then shortly thereafter the vigilantes captured one of the Harp brothers at a nearby crossroads where they proceeded to place his severed head in a fork of a tree which was forevermore known as "Harp's Head." It's long been said that the militiamen left the man's head in the tree to serve as a warning to the people in the area

to show just exactly what would happen if they ever decided to embark upon a life of crime.

Then following that rather impromptu execution of one of the Harp brothers, a few of the militia members trailed the other Harp brother all the way down the Natchez Trace to the city of New Orleans, Louisiana where they just happened to find him enjoying himself in a brothel. And after first dragging the man to the outside the militiamen proceeded to execute him right there on the sidewalk.

Chapter Two

Modern-day Kentucky

With three years of military service in the U. S. Air Force behind him, and with twenty-five thousand dollars of questionably procured money in his pocket, you would think that a person's first thoughts would be of home; and yet, Derek Christian wasn't so sure about that.

His home was in Western Kentucky, that is, if he ever decided to return; but what was waiting for him there? What with the ever increasing number of high sulfur coalmines being shut down every year, and then too, there was the mean-spirited woman who was under the impression that they were betrothed to be married, Derek wasn't any too thrilled with the idea of going back home; but he probably would.

His wife to be was a new transplant to that part of Western Kentucky. Her name was Barbara Holton of the Holton Clan from the Pattyville, Kentucky district. In Derek's opinion she was without a doubt the sexiest and the most sensual woman he had ever met. But marrying into the Holton clan would necessarily cause Derek to undertake some very deep considerations; for the rumors abounded that if a person were to ever betray a member of the Holton clan in any way, then they would just as likely take you down to the river and (drowned-ye). They were a rowdy bunch, alright, and they were most generally inclined to settle their arguments with knives and guns.

According to the local legend, the Holton clan had migrated to Derek's part of Western Kentucky after a group of vigilantes had driven them out of the Pattyville district following a fiasco which had occurred at a funeral home. For years, the Holtons had a longstanding feud with another clan from the Pattyville area; and the melee' which had ensued inside a funeral home had purportedly come about after the elder Holton had deliberately urinated on the body of a dead man while he was lying in a casket. Then once the fight had begun in earnest, the patriarch of Holton family had proceeded to cut off one of the dead man's brother's ear.

Then later that same day Uncle Clinton Holton would become another casualty of the feud when he became involved in a barroom brawl with a member of the enemy clan and wound up getting shot in the stomach; amazingly, though, Uncle Clinton somehow survived that ordeal.

Eventually, though, both sides began to tire of the constant fighting and the leaders of the clans agreed upon a tentative, if somewhat fragile truce. But when the feud broke out anew all the other families in the area that weren't personally involved in the mayhem formed a vigilante posse that immediately banned the entire Holton clan from the Pattyville area upon pain of death should the warning not be heeded.

Babs Holton, as Barbara preferred to be called, was a dark-haired beauty of about five feet and four inches of height; but when those black eyes of hers were on fire she gave the impression of being seven feet tall and bullet proof.

According to their family's history, before migrating to Western Kentucky the Holtons were some of the first settlers to pioneer and then homestead the mountainous regions of Tennessee; and during those early days the legend states further that a few of the Holton men had married into a Native American family which might have given Babs her coal black hair and high cheekbones plus the inability for her to be able to successfully drink any alcoholic beverages at all.

At times, Babs could be as sweet and gentle as a newborn lamb, but then on other occasions she could be just as volatile as her four brothers, who without a doubt, were some of the meanest fighters who'd ever come out of the mountains.

So, as a result, Derek had made it a steadfast point to never drink any alcoholic beverages with the Holton clan. On the other hand, his decision not to socialize with the Holtons was brought on by the fact that not only was the Holton clan a too violent of a group to drink with, but he also thought that the drinking of liquor was a foolish waste of good money. In reality, though, that line of thinking had more to do with what Derek was really all about; and that was his desire to become extremely wealthy.

Chapter Three

The Christian family had migrated to Western Kentucky to help lay some of the first railroad tracks ever constructed in that area. Ultimately, though, they fell in love with the beautiful and fertile land of Western Kentucky which included the gently rolling hills and lush meadows which surround the community of Clay, Kentucky, which in their opinion, was one of the most beautiful parts of the whole of Webster County.

Then once settled in, the Christian family decided to homestead a tract of bottomland in the Tradewater River region; and subsequently, they have been living in that district ever since. Then again, who wouldn't love the beautifully wooded hills which at times will block the mist covered meadows until the late morning sun creeps up high enough to cause the fields to come alive with the bright vistas of Kentucky Bluegrass and the flowering goldenrod plants which just happen to be the state flower.

And even though more than a few of the Christian family men were still employed by the same railroad company that their ancestors had worked for back in their home state of West Virginia, some of the members of the Christian family had opted to work in the coalmines of Western Kentucky. Then too, quite a few of their clan had answered the call to serve their Lord by becoming Baptist Ministers.

Yet when it came to physical labor Derek Christian didn't particularly care for any of the types of the work that many of his family members favored; instead, he planned on searching for a vocation that would allow him to amass a small fortune, while at the same time, doing as little work as humanely possible. Derek also felt that he was extremely fortunate to have an overabundance of a certain type of acid in his body, which at times would not only cause him to suffer severe muscle cramps while performing manual labor, but it also caused his jewelry, and even those small metal screws in his reading glasses to turn green. Also, oddly enough, one of the very worst effects of his strange ailment was that his condition would not allow him to remain outdoors for any extended amount of time because that same chemical seemed to attract mosquitoes and chiggers.

Indeed, there were times when Derek felt that he was truly blessed to have such a fortunate and God-given excuse that would allow him to forgo any type of physical labor without receiving a lot of criticism from his family and neighbors. Derek had also excused himself from ever working in the coalmines, when after on three separate occasions, the roofs of the mines had caved in on both his father and his grandfather.

Chapter Four

A distant cousin of Derek's, who just happened to be one of his childhood heroes, was a remarkably interesting character to say the least. For at one time in the past Harold Hanson had been one of the biggest bootleggers and whiskey runners in the entire Western Kentucky area. But then after he had decided to go straight, he ended up owning a great number of successful businesses and productive farms in the Western Kentucky area.

One of Harold's claims to fame was that he had been wounded several times by members of the notorious Shelton gang which included Blackie Harris, who was another infamous bootlegging gangster member of the brethren. At the time, the Shelton gang operated primarily out of Southern Illinois; but its tentacles reached deeply into the neighboring states which included Kentucky and Indiana. Supposedly, it was one of Harold's old lieutenants from the illegal whisky business who had shown Derek a few of the sites along a Southern Illinois highway where some of the casualties of the whiskey wars had allegedly been buried.

Derek suspected that most Harold's war stories were mostly true, and especially since Derek just happened to personally know one of families which had lost five of their sons in the whiskey wars. Then again, it wasn't only the bootlegging business which had caused the people living in the Western Kentucky area a great deal of trouble because two of Derek's own family members had been killed in the coalmine strikes which had taken place during the early parts of the twentieth century.

In one confrontation, the owners of a local coalmine had allegedly hired a trainload of strikebreakers from the city of Chicago, Illinois to prevent the coalminers from Western Kentucky from joining the United Mineworker's Union. And in the gun battle which ensued, one of Derek's distant cousins was killed by one of the strikebreakers, while at the same time another of his cousins had died at the hands of a local deputy sheriff.

To Derek, it seemed as if violence had always plagued this part of the country; and even his hometown of Clay, Kentucky had seen its own share of mayhem. For when Derek was but a child, he just happened to be downtown Clay one day when an armed and dangerous man had blatantly refused to surrender his weapon to the town Marshal who had no other recourse then but to employ deadly force. Then later, the local courts would declare that the marshal had simply been upholding the law, and therefore, the shooting was a case of justifiable homicide.

Nonetheless, a similar fate might have befallen Derek's three hundred-and-thirty-pound uncle Vernis Curry Paulson, who after first imbibing an enormous quantity of moonshine liquor, had shown up in downtown Clay on

Election Day with a large hog leg pistol strapped to his waist. Yet fortunately for uncle Vernis the same Town Marshall who had just previously shot and killed a man in downtown Clay was able to disarm the drunken uncle Vernis who was allowed to sleep it off in the local jail.

Chapter Five

“Booster,” as Derek Christian was affectionately known to his family and friends owned a lanky and rawboned six-foot four-inch frame which was handsomely topped off by an unruly shock of dark brown hair that hung loosely above an affable smile. Some people remarked that he reminded them of the loveable Will Rogers of old who had hailed from Oklahoma and was quite the celebrity back in his day. Rogers had appeared in several Hollywood films as the loveable old cowboy who could perform amazing rope tricks. Rogers especially enjoyed being in the spotlight where he could effectively deliver his political barbs which were usually aimed at the office holding politicians.

And even though Will Rogers was a very popular and entertaining satirist and political activist back in his day, his brand of humor wouldn’t necessarily be out of style today since it would be strikingly similar to a few of the same types of standup comics who appear regularly on television.

For the most part, though, the people who knew Booster certainly didn’t believe that he was a satirist or even an activist like the Will Rogers of old, instead, they thought of him more as a pitchman for he always had something going on which he hoped would make him rich. But in order for him to fully implement his latest money-making scheme, he would not only need the co-operation of his rather large and extended family, but he would also need the assistance from quite a few of the other people who lived and worked in the region.

Nevertheless, there was always something new and exciting going on when Booster was around and about, and a person could always bet that whatever was going on with Booster it would certainly be entertaining. Even so, the locals always hoped and prayed that Booster’s latest venture would not cost them too much money.

It wasn’t so much that the people didn’t trust Booster for when they first learned about one of his latest exploits, they would usually just shake their heads and smile; then again, they would also be a bit curious as to what the newest scheme was all about.

On the other hand, though, they would also have to admit that there had been a few people around the area who had made a great deal of money from Booster’s varied and sundry enterprises.

Chapter Six

It's also a well-known fact that Derek Christian wasn't the only colorful character to have called Western Kentucky his home for there was another man who'd hailed from the same general area and had gone on to accomplish even greater things. When Booster's father was a child growing up in the town of Clay there was a local businessman there by the name of Hunky Blueford, who at the time, had owned a tiny ice-cream shop in the downtown area where he would serve you up a tremendously large scoop of ice cream on a cone for only five cents.

In time, however, Mr. Blueford would go on to own several dairy farms in the general area as well as many other related businesses, until eventually, he would amass enough money to afford him a chance to run for the U. S. Congress. Unfortunately, though, the man failed in his attempt to win a seat in the U. S. Congress. However, the man's financial successes had made an incalculable impression on young Derek Christian for it'd shown him just exactly what money can buy.

But then after having spent some quality time with his family and his fiancé, Babs Holton, Booster decided to look up an old childhood friend of his. Whenever Booster thought about his early childhood days it would invariably include the memory of the day that he and his friend Tug Whitledge had shown up in downtown Clay with blood streaming from their faces and arms where they were forced to confess to the town Marshall that not only had they'd been caught stealing watermelons from Mr. Winstead's patch, but that he'd peppered them with some rock salt loaded shotgun shells; and so naturally, everybody in town had a good laugh over that particular incident.

Derek and Tug had spent many a memorable day while swimming and "hogging" for fish, turtles and the occasional copper belly water snake which, from time to time, could be found in the hollowed-out spaces below the water line and beneath the roots of the large trees that lined the banks of the Tradewater River.

Hence at that point in time Booster's most immediate problem was how best to locate his friend Tug. Eventually, however, he was able to find him working in the fields alongside his father and his two brothers. Then after sharing a few moments of genuine emotions with one another, the two friends made plans to meet up later that evening at an eating place in downtown Clay.

And after they'd finishing their evening meal the two friends hopped into Tug's pickup truck and headed down the old state highway number 109

towards Providence, Kentucky where they'd planned on picking up Clifton E. Raleigh III who was the third part of the trilogy of their lifelong friendships.

Cliff was a pleasure, alright, for he was joyous, happy, and free most of the time; and that was in spite of having to live with the loss of his mother which had happened when he was just a child. Of course it wasn't only the loss of his mother which had hampered his emotional maturity, for just shortly after Cliff's mother had passed away his father had married a woman many years his junior; and later on, that impromptu marriage had proved to be a big mistake when shortly thereafter the new bride began an affair with a young farmhand who worked for Cliff's father.

In time, the young wife and her lover devised what they thought was a foolproof plan whereby they could do away with the older gentleman in order to acquire his rather sizeable estate which included a large productive farm in addition to the money he'd earned in his younger years when he was a professional prizefighter.

And in addition to the property that Mr. Raleigh owned outright he had also invested tens of thousands of dollars in the various diamond rings that he wore on the fingers of both hands. Evidently, those outward signs of luxury and wealth had been too much for the young bride and her lover to resist.

So when the full story of that terrible event was eventually revealed every soul in town would learn that the young bride had suggested to her elderly husband that the two of them should embark upon a lusty and sensuous twilight romp atop the highest hill on their farm; and unfortunately for the elderly man it was there that Mr. Raleigh was lured into an encounter which had almost proved to be fatal. It seems that after first disrobing while standing on the hilltop the young bride had gained Mr. Raleigh's rapt attention, while at the same time, the young farmhand had crept up behind the older gentleman and then proceeded to shove him off the top of a high cliff to what should have been his death.

Then immediately following the hilltop assault and being that the young couple honestly believed that the older man was indeed dead, the two lovebirds then hurriedly returned to the farm where they took their time in cleaning out the entire household of everything that was of any value. During the following day, however, the situation had changed drastically when the young wife received word from their bank that the joint bank accounts that she had shared with her husband had been closed.

It seems as if Clifton Raleigh II had somehow managed to drag his beaten and bloodied body all the way into the town of Morganfield, Kentucky where a shop owner had observed him buying firearms which he said he direly needed to exact the revenge that he felt he had coming to him because of the terrible wrong which had just been done to him. Then fortunately for the young Mrs. Raleigh, someone from town was sent out to the Raleigh farm to tell the young couple that they'd better clear out of the area before the older man returned home.

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And so, by the time that the elderly Mr. Raleigh was able to return to his home the two would-be murdering thieves had absconded with all the personal property that they could possibly load onto their two pickup trucks. In the meantime, though, some of the townspeople in Morganfield, Kentucky reported that they had heard that the two lovebirds were headed for California. So then by practicing a lot of patience and tolerance the young Clifton Raleigh III had somehow managed to rise above the turmoil and trauma that he had been faced with throughout much of his life. More importantly, though, Clifton, had developed into what most people considered to be a normal and responsible young man.

Chapter Seven

As most of the people in the area were inclined to say, Booster Christian was a dreamer of elaborate designs, and as such, his number one dream was that he would someday be able to sell a one-dollar Hula-hoop to every single person in China for a princely sum of five dollars apiece; and with well over a billion Chinese on the planet it would seem as if a scheme of that magnitude would surely return a rather healthy profit.

Yet no one could say that Booster hadn't been successful in at least a few of his previous ventures: for at various times he was heavily invested in the pyramid types of businesses which had included the original phone cards; and then later on he'd become part of the herbal revolution. And during the three years in which he had served in the military he was able to continue with many of his business interests back home in Kentucky. For example, he had been able to add several hundred new clients to his various pyramid businesses because of the thousands of U. S. servicemen and women, he had met while serving in the U. S. Air Force.

Still, there was a well-hidden side of Booster's personality and character that he didn't necessarily want people to know about, and that very simply was the fact that he always kept an unknown plan of attack and agenda under his hat until such time that he was fully ready to spring it upon the unassuming public.

And being the satellites had begun to circle the globe he knew that a person needed only to own a computer; and then to also subscribe to an internet service provider in order to send electronic e-mails to any of his thousands of business associates which were scattered throughout the world. So naturally, Booster's various Pyramid schemes had expanded exponentially. Then again, that was mainly due to the thanks of the hundreds of new pyramid members that he had brought on board while serving those three years in the U. S. Military.

Back in the latter part of the twentieth century, Booster was one of the first people in the Western Kentucky area to become a distributor for the very popular pre-paid phone cards, and within a very short period of time the selling of those phone cards would end up being a most lucrative business for him. For when the phone cards first appeared on the market, they had created a land rush type of commerce. Those cards were especially coveted by the people who did not have access to long distance calling. Eventually, though, the cards would end up being sold out of practically every convenience store in the country.

Nevertheless, it'd been a tremendous learning experience for a young businessman such as Booster, who from then on would learn that for a

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person to become successful in any of the pyramid types of schemes an individual needed only to bring together a group of people who were interested in making some fast money. Derek also discovered that the only way for the original distributors in any pyramid plan to make any real money would be for them to continue to bring new people on board. And of course, this would ensure that those who were climbing to the top of the distributors list would benefit financially from the newest members of the scheme who were still on the bottom of the ever-expanding list.

Then once the phone card game was finally over and done with the next pyramid type of program that Booster became involved in was put together by a group of attorneys, who theoretically, would accept an inexpensive prepaid fee if any of the paid-up members of the plan were to ever find themselves in need of some good professional legal advice. In a way, this program was remarkably like the prepaid phone card plan to the extent that the main purpose of the plan was to continually bring new people on board who wished to become distributors.

It seemed as if Booster had always been involved in one scheme or another, and at one time in the past he was member of a pyramid plan that distributed various health food supplements such as herbs, vitamins, diet pills and natural health products. Of course, it must be said that the main objective for anyone involved in those types of pyramid schemes is that it's not necessary for a member to personally sell the products, although they may do so if they wish, but the main goal is for the original members of the plan to continually bring new distributors into the fold. For when all the smoke clears, that is how they make their big money. It's quite simple; a distributor is paid a commission for every new person he or she brings on board.

So, as a rule, the only people who ever make any real money in a pyramid scheme are the ones at the top of the distributor list, and from then on the newest members of the scheme will simply help to enrich the pocketbooks of the people who were already at the top of the list.

Chapter Eight

Since Booster knew practically every single farmer in the area by his first name it seemed only logical to him that he should devise a plan that would help them make some extra money; of course, it goes without saying that the plan would also have to help him out financially. So then after much due consideration Booster was ready to launch a new business venture that would give the farmers a way in which to harvest a quick and easy cash crop: by the same token, the scheme wouldn't require them to put up a lot of front money; or at least, they wouldn't be required to make an enormous investment.

Then as luck would have it, the timing for Booster's newest adventure couldn't have come at a better time for it was about that same point in time when the tobacco production in the state of Kentucky had begun to sharply decline. And since most farmers could always use another cash crop to supplement their incomes which usually come from the sales of their grain crops and livestock, Booster sincerely hoped that they would be open to a brand-new moneymaking type of proposition.

So then after first consulting with some fish farm owners from the deep South, Booster came up with a plan that would require of each local farmer to make an annual investment of only twelve hundred dollars to restock their newly acquired fishponds. His figuring was that once the fully-grown fish were sold to the distributors in the East and Midwestern parts of the country the farmers could expect to show a profit of three thousand dollars a year; and that was after having worked on the project for a period of only eight months. Those four months off would allow for the inclement winter weather which a person could expect if you lived in the Western Kentucky area.

In Derek's plan the farmers were also required to dig their own fishponds; but if there was one thing that he knew for sure about farmers was that they certainly were not afraid of a little hard work.

The problem was, however, Booster had no real evidence to support the facts relating to the annual dollar amount of profit that the farmers could expect to earn from the fish farms: for in all actuality he'd manufactured those numbers in order to fit them into his somewhat overblown sales presentation; but as Booster was fond of saying, "Absence of evidence is not absence of fact".

Nonetheless, the first ten farmers that Booster approached with the fish farm plan seemed quite receptive to the idea; and as such, each of them had come up with the twelve-hundred-dollar deposit. Though the next man on

his list of prospects was a farmer by the name of Grant Tolliver who also just happened to be a Baptist Minister named Reverend Tolliver. The man listened attentively and politely to Booster's sales pitch but then when Booster asked him for the twelve-hundred-dollar deposit the reverend answered him with a statement of his own.

"When Pigs Fly," he said, and that had pretty well ended the conversation. "And besides," as the pastor continued, "God always has and always will provide for us."

It was also at that point in time when the reverend inquired about Booster's spiritual condition; and since the reverend was obligated to carry the Gospel to the sinners, he wouldn't take no for an answer until Booster agreed to attend Reverend Tolliver's Southern Baptist Church on the following Sunday morning.

To his credit, Booster did indeed keep his word to the preacher for he actually did attend the pastor's church service on the following Sunday morning; and at the end of the service, as was customary, the pastor asked everybody in the church to bow their heads and to also close their eyes.

Of course, the bowing of heads would just naturally be followed by a musical arrangement called the "Altar Call" which is a fairly common practice in many of the Baptist Churches. And as the more frequent visitors are aware that particular part of the service is an open invitation to the people who may wish to come forward just so they might receive God's forgiveness for their sins; and if they feel the need to be saved then it also affords them the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior.

Then somewhat amazingly it was at that very moment when a strange and wonderful feeling came over Booster; and even stranger was the fact that he couldn't seem to resist the urge to rise up and then to walk towards the altar where he kneeled and began to confess his sins before God, Reverend Tolliver, and all the rest of his friends and neighbors.

At that very moment Booster had not only asked God to forgive him for all the mistakes that he'd made while involved in the pyramid schemes, but also for all the wrong things he'd done while stationed in the Philippine Islands. Eventually, though, Booster was able to rise up from his knees; and then once he had regained his composure, he pleaded openly with the preacher for permission to share his confession and testimony with the entire congregation.

Then right there in front of God and the parishioners Booster vowed that the monies the farmers had invested with him to furnish the seed stock on their uncompleted fish farms would immediately be returned to them with interest. Then after the entire congregation had said amen in unison the preacher asked Booster to please come back for both the Wednesday night prayer meeting and the following Sunday's service just so he could once again share his testimony with the congregation for in the preacher's eyes it was beginning to look as if God might have called Derek to serve.

Chapter Nine

Ever since they had first migrated from Kentucky from West Virginia religion and hard work were certainly nothing new to the Christian family; and of course, Derek knew he had come from a long line of farmers, railroaders, coalminers, and Baptist Ministers. So, in keeping with the family's tradition a few of Derek's family members had always insisted on staging their own personal Tent Revival Meetings in and around the Western Kentucky area.

And more often than not, it was Derek's mother who always played the piano during those church revivals while his father did most of the singing. Though as a rule, it was his grandfather, Samuel Christian, who did most of the preaching. To a child, those summertime revivals were exciting and most pleasurable, and Derek had many a fond memory of the times when he'd sat on a front row bench beneath that huge tent while at the same time dangling his bare feet in the sawdust which had just recently been scattered upon the bare earth.

Then at the end of the revival service the nice ladies of the area would usually serve the Christian family a box lunch of chicken dinners along with warm milk which had come straight from a cow; and on certain occasions the ladies might even bring along some fresh homemade pies or some apple pan dowdies.

In those days the love of religion was definitely a passion in the Western Kentucky region, and not only was Derek expected to attend church services every Sunday morning, but he'd also been commanded to attend the Wednesday evening prayer service. So, while growing up, attending church was as much a part of his normal routine as was his schooling and farm work. And even when he had traveled along with his high school basketball team to the Kentucky State finals, he was expected to attend church at least one time while there.

For Derek, his new way of living had left him feeling free and clean. And then once all the fish farm money had been returned to the farmers it was not long before some of the leaders of the area churches started asking Derek to speak at their churches. And when the Southern Baptist Conference announced that they would schedule their next annual convention in the city of Nashville, Tennessee nobody in the area was any too surprised when the local ministers nominated Derek and Reverend Tolliver to represent them at the convention. Of course, only Reverend Tolliver would have the authority