

“I CAN DREAM AGAIN” CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

CHAPTER 5 – A CUB SCOUT GONE BAD

The James Gang Is Born

I was 10 and on my second time in the fifth grade when I met Billy. We were outside on the basketball court running up and down when I “shook him” (today they call it “crossing him over”) and broke for the hoop. Billy pushed me from behind, and I still remember landing on the hard asphalt court, tearing my new jeans. I was angry because they were my only new jeans for the rest of the year. I got up quick with Chuckie Smith on my right and grabbed Billy, ready to punch him in the face.

Billy was from Yonkers, a city boy who thought he was cool. Chuckie was right there, encouraging me to lay into him and take him out. I remember looking at Billy with his baby face as he pleaded, “No, no, please, no.”

For some reason I let him go and looked at him as I shook his hand, asking, “Are you OK?” Billy and I just hit it off. We were so much alike—same mannerisms, same way of thinking, same way of joking around. We became inseparable. That is when the “James Gang” was born.

Marijuana gripped my soul, and my true addiction to drugs began. Billy, a couple of other friends, and I were walking near our neighborhood park. We found a little plastic sandwich bag with joints in it. We ran into the park, smoked the pot, began to hallucinate, and broke out in uncontrollable laughter. Our mouths became dry (an expression pot users call “cottonmouth”). Then, we began to experience insatiable hunger we called the “munchies.” We stole drinks and food from the picnic tables, ran into the woods, and gorged ourselves, all while laughing hysterically. That day we were convinced drugs helped us have the most fun we ever had. Because I had so much pain and no idea how to handle it, smoking pot seemed to help me forget.