

Clyburn Family News

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My Hero --by Ronnie Clyburn Lee

This is a story about my dad, Frank Clyburn. This is my first memory of my father.

I was about three years old, and I was sleeping in bed one night with my sister Joie, when for some reason I woke up. I wanted to go find my dad, but I needed to have my shoes on before I could go. (I must have not liked being barefoot!)

I went to put on my shoes and there was a great big Daddy Long Legs spider in my shoe! I started screaming and crying and my dad ran in the bedroom to see what was the matter. He laughed a little when I showed him the spider, and comforted me with the fact that all would be okay. He then lead me into the bathroom. I distinctly remember him saying, "Lets give it a swimming lesson" and he knocked the spider it the toilet and gave it a flush. The was the first time that my dad became my hero. There have been many times since.

(Editors Note: I remember that episode well. Ronnie, Woody, Joie and I were living in Nikiska (N. Kenai, AK). Ronnie was still two years old. In the middle of the night she started screaming. I thought she'd been tackled by at least a Mt. Lyon. Here she was jumping up and down on the bed. It took several minutes before I could find out what was the matter. It was pitch black dark but she saw this big long-legged spider in her shoe.)



MEMORIES OF SOME FRIENDS OF MINE -By Frank Clyburn

Stan Livingston

Stan Livingston was a good friend of mine who lived in Wrangell, Alaska. I first met him in 1968 when I gave him a part of a can of pipe tobacco. When next I met him after Holly Bastin and I were married in 1970 he remembered that gift.

Stan had just married for the first time in his life. I believe he was about 65 years old when we first met. He had done lots of things in his life. He had, as a young guy, followed the grain harvests from state to state. He also picked fruit for a living when young.

He moved around a lot. He told me about mining over around Weaverville, CA during the depression of the 1930's. He said he found just enough gold to survive. Stan also had fallen

timber for years over around Susanville, CA before they had chain saws. He still had big shoulder muscles up the side of his neck from falling timber with those misery whips and two-man hand saws. He could pack anything if he could get it upon his shoulder. A heavy load would cut into my shoulder but not his with all that muscle.

Later Stanley worked in the construction industry for years. I believe he told me that he started working in that field during WW II at Kodiak Island, Alaska when the government built an airfield and stuff there. He had the opportunity to buy some property at that time and did so with the intent of keeping it for his old age and a retirement home.

Stan had purchased a former homestead (360 acres I believe it was) on Farm Island, an island at the mouth of the Stikine River. This became quite valuable later as there is not much private property in South East Alaska. This river is located just Northeast of Wrangell, Alaska and Southeast of Petersburg, Alaska. The river is a major gateway into Canada and Telegraph Creek, BC. He built a cabin on the homestead and moved a tractor there on a large river scow after he retired as a construction worker.

Another old timer Norman Prince at Wrangell said that when Stan was younger when he was drinking in a bar that he would let out a squall and put both footprints on the ceiling. I guess

he was a tough one in a fight. Norman also told about Stanley and the *trapline*. Apparently Stan had so many women on the string that he had to call for help one time! He couldn't handle them all. I think from the way old Norm explained it that he was one who helped out some!! Haha.

Stan also told me a story that he said he had never told anyone before. He made me swear to not tell anyone until he and Norman were dead. Well, quite a few people wanted to buy a piece of his Farm Island homestead but he wouldn't sell. The only piece he sold was a 5 acre piece to his good friend Norman Prinze. Now Norman wasn't the only friend that Stan had but Stan told me why he sold the property to Norman. It seems that one time Stan was having an affair with a woman. This was before he knew Norman but soon he found out that the woman was married and who she was married too. He later become ashamed of it because he and Norman eventually became good friends and even batched together for a time. Norman never knew that she had been messing around with Stan. When Norman asked to buy a piece of ground on Farm Island Stan agreed to sell him 5 acres to help clear his conscience.

One time while he and Norman were batching together in Wrangell, at a cabin Norman owned, a woman wouldn't stop chasing after them. She just kept showing up on their doorstep whenever they got home. They got tired of her bothering them



but both were too nice to tell her so. They invited her to eat dinner with them one day. They took some hamburger and made patties, put the patties between two slices of bread and munched it down. The woman got up and left without eating and never came back! Guess she wanted her hamburgers cooked! Ha..How they both laughed when telling this story. Old Stan would go down on the beach and eat the steamer sized clams raw right out of the shell. He once went to Hawaii and said that he had lots of fun but he was out at the native villages and lived with them while there. He never went to the tourist spots. He was quite a guy.

Every year he built a large garden. He gave away much of it. His wife Opel, also a friend of mine, canned lots of the garden produce. Opel was half Osage Indian and a character! I used to get her goat by calling her Blackfoot (she was barefoot most of the time). She was a Scorpio while Stan was born a Gemini. He would not fight with her or even argue but she needed to create excitement sometimes. He once told her to go fight with Clyburn. Hahaha.. Opel and I had many arguments and squabbles...never once did we get mad. We had the most fun!

Once when my Uncle Thomas Miles Clyburn came to visit me in Alaska his first meal there was cooked by Opel. It was a meal of all homegrown food and moose steak that Stanley had shot. Stan said that the moose was a gift from God as it had came right to his house and who was he to refuse such a gift? Uncle Tom liked Stan and Stan's homestead so much that he considered coming to Wrangell to live. Stan told him to come ahead and he could stay with him as long as he wanted. Tom was considering it very

much because he was thinking of trapping during the winter on Stan's Farm Island Homestead.

I helped Stan cut wood often and helped him fix his boat and in return he gave me many vegetables. He loved kids and almost raised a whole family of them in Petersburg before moving to Wrangell. They often came to visit him there. He loved Joie and Woody, my children, and they went to the homestead with him and Opel often. Often Holly and I would end up at his Farm Island place on the weekends also.

Stan had a lot of stories. One of them was about his boat. He had a 19 foot river scow that he had built. I asked him why it was 19 foot long which seemed an odd size. He laughed and said that he had built it inside of a shed and it was 20 some foot to start with but he couldn't get it out. He had to cut a several feet off of it to get it out of the shed! He always told on himself. For instance the evening he got drunk at the local bar talking with friends. While coming home on their bicycles Stan ran off the road into the blackberry bushes (about 10 foot down a steep bank into the middle of the bushes). Opel was so disgusted with him that she left him in the bushes and went on home alone. Haha. He would laugh while telling that story.

Nothing made him angry but much made him happy. A log would drift up on the beach just when he needed wood. He would say that it was a gift from God or that the Lord provides and he'd chuckle.

One winter I kept their dog for them while they went to Florida. Opel had relatives there. They thought the dog was going to die so they said that if I wished I could get rid of it while they were gone. I fed it only dry dog food while they were gone and when they came back it was frisky

as a pup. They were amazed at how healthy it was. They fed it tons of scraps and it was so fat it could hardly waddle. They both thanked me because they loved the dog.

Stanley came by Yreka to visit me one spring after I had moved back here. We had a great time and he would tell a story about how to eat grits. He learned this in Georgia earlier when he had started to put milk and sugar on them. Someone soon informed him that only a "Damn Yank" ate them that way! He said that he found out that Southern folks ate them with butter instead of milk. He loved to tell that story. On that trip I took him to his sister's place in Grants Pass, OR and met her and her husband. I'd previously met one of his brothers who lived in Woodburn, OR and his old friend Orville Snavelly from the Little Applegate, OR. Orville

him and my dad Woodrow Clyburn, who was visiting me at the time, a ride up the Stikine River to the Great Glacier (way up in Canada-probably about 50 miles) at Stan's request.

I visited Snavelly on the Little Applegate before he died and drank some of his homemade brandy. He died in Hornbrook, CA several years later.

When I was last in Wrangell, in 1979, I helped Stanley build a 24 foot river scow. I learned a lot from him and this time he built it under his house which was open to the outside. He was one of the most spiritual people I've ever met and he didn't belong to a church.

Before he died he got to meet my granddaughter Jasmine Clyburn. I have a photo taken for me by my daughter Joie of her, Jasmine and Stanley together.

Norman Prinze

Wrangell, Alaska. He was running the chipper there and just working for a few years until retirement. He was living in the small two room cabin I told you he had when he and Stan Livingston batched together. It was located close to the City Market in Wrangell. He was a friend of my boss and friend Richard Ovrebo. After first meeting him there was something about Norm that attracted me.

Norm used to make homemade beer and also a homemade champagne. This champagne was very potent. It was made out of different fruits with a main ingredient being raisins. He made homemade corned moose also and smoked bear and lots of salmon. He smoked lots of salmon for his friends. I killed a bear one season that Norman smoked for me.

He used to tell stories of the time he was a fisherman. He told of having a rifle that jammed on him. He needed meat and one day he was trying for a small buck on the beach. It jammed again. He threw it overboard and exclaimed "What don't work, don't ride!" And that's the way he thought. If you weren't willing to work then you got nothing from him. He had no use for a useless person who wouldn't work. At the same time he was a very good and loyal friend but you had to earn his respect. I did that I think, as we became good friends.

Norm would drink 150 proof Hudson Bay Rum and smoke little cigarette sized cigars. When he'd tell a story about someone who he felt done him wrong, he'd glare and get red faced and sometimes even shake. I'd think to myself, "is this old guy going to jump across the table and hit me?" But I soon learned that was just his reliving the old memories as he spoke. It was simply his way of telling a story. He really was a very gentle person.

Farm Island, Stikine River, AK Aug 1979



Norman Prinze - Stan Livingston 77 yr

came to Wrangell, to visit with Stan and he being miner brought a briefcase of gold nuggets with him. *He brought his homemade choke cherry brandy and peach brandy with him also.* He had alka seltzer bottles filled with nuggets. Each bottle filled with nuggets of a certain size. I gave

Norman Prinze was an old fisherman. He used to tell lots of stories about his fishing days. He was born in the state of Maine and raised in the Seattle area.

I first met Norman when I started working at the Alaska Wood Products lumber mill in

Yes, he did tell me about that wife he'd had, and how he found out she was cheating on him. He never forgot the pain, I could see that as he spoke, even tho it had been many years before.

He also said that she was native and that if you marry a native that you marry her brothers, sisters, cousins etc. He told stories of family members just walking into his home and borrowing stuff...because what was yours, was theirs. He couldn't handle that thinking very well.

Another time he told me that during WWII that England had advertized for guns. They asked US citizens to send them any guns that they could spare because they had none. The British citizens weren't allowed to own most firearms and were defenseless. Norm figured that would never happen to the American people as long as the anti-gun people didn't get control, but beware if our country ever became unarmed!

One story he told was of a fisherman who was wintering on Prince Of Wales Island in SE Alaska. He had a cabin some distance from Point Baker. Norm told about how one day this fellow walked up the trail several miles to Point Baker in the snow. He had been making some of that homemade champagne and he took some of the leavings from the crock with him. About a mile from town he stopped and using his hands shaped something resembling bear sign with those scrapings from the bottom of the crock. Then he made some large bear tracks in the snow.... He then proceeded to go on into town. He went to the local bar and just ordered a drink and waited. Sure enough, soon someone came in to the bar and told of the bear sign and big tracks down the trail to town. He put on a big show of not believing it as it was winter and all and

didn't everybody know bears hibernated in the winter. Of course the fellow said well follow me and I'll show you. So here they go, with several others, tracking down the trail to see if the guy was lying about seeing the big tracks and bear sign in the snow.

So they get there and sure enough, here's the tracks and there is what looks like bear sign. So this guy looks at it and he says "It looks like bear sign." He gets down on his hands and knees and smells it and say's "Well it smells like bear sign." So then he picks some of it up in his fingers, crumbles it up some and puts it in his mouth and says "By God! It is bear sign!"

Norm used to say that those guys were all turning red and looking like they were gagging and about to puke. He'd laugh a lot when he told that story. It wouldn't have surprised me if he was that guy because he used to have a cabin to winter in, in the same area. He never said it was him tho...

He loved to hunt and he finally got remarried to a nice lady named Eleanor. She liked to hunt also. Norman, with her help, built a nice house at Wrangell in which they lived most of the year. When Norman finally built a cabin on Farm Island on the property he purchased from Stan Livingston she built a large part of it. I purchased a wood cook stove from my Uncle Tom Clyburn on Ash Creek, CA and brought it up to Norman. That is the stove they put into the cabin.

Both Norman and Eleanor listened the radio (no TV) and to records and in particular the logging songs of Buzz Martin of Eugene, Oregon. I really enjoyed those songs also. Sure wish I could get a copy of them now.

Norm started getting stove

up with gout and arthritis more and more and she took care of him. She was a very special lady. When Norm got sick the doctor sent him to Seattle to the hospital there. They found that he had cancer in his lungs. They took one lung out. Finally they let him come home. Really they let him come tell his friends good-bye because he didn't live but a few weeks after coming home. He was a very important man in my life. I will never forget him or his stories. He was my friend.

Father Andrei

Father Andrei Urusov was one of the most wonderful people that I've ever met. He was a Russian Orthodox Priest and he was from Russia.

I first met Father Andrei when my wife to be Katherine Dice introduced him to me. She asked him to marry us as the regular Catholic Priest that she knew wouldn't do it as I wasn't Catholic and as I was divorced from Holly my first wife.

Well, Father Andrei was scary. He'd ask questions that I'd



rather not answer or even think about. Hard personal questions. Well anyway I met him a couple of time and he married us at Trail,

Oregon in his little chapel August 20, 1994. And that was that. I didn't see him until after my wife and I split up over two and a half years later.

I was extremely broken up over the split up and felt desperate. So what did I do? I went to see the Monk who married us and even tho wary of him, whom I felt a great respect for. Yes, he asked me all the questions that I didn't want to think about and answer. But I did answer and as a result of the loss



of my wife, I gained something very special. That was a friendship and knowledge of Father Andrei. I started to know his true value and greatness. He explained that he'd married us as two not as three or four or more. He said that the New Testament of the Bible doesn't allow for divorce but in all reality it had been dissolved by her with her actions. He always wanted her to come speak with him after we split up, but she never would.

He would every day have liturgy and communion in his Russian Orthodox style. He would never fail even tho at times he became very ill. One time he even fell outside while it was raining into a puddle of water. It was about forty-five minutes before he could get up and go inside. I started going to the Skete of All Saints as he called his

Research Center of Christian Russian Culture (basically a library). He was building his library book by book, most of them donated to him.

The first thing he'd want to do was eat. He'd have me cook for him. He loved pancakes and I cooked and ate many of them with him. Often he'd eat cheese and crackers or a certain type of heavy bread that he liked. We had soup, pancakes, cheese, boiled eggs, coffee, and whatever he had. Often I'd bring him something even tho he didn't want me too. Much of his food, and it wasn't much, was donated by folks that came for his liturgies.

He didn't have much. But yet, he was rich in other ways. We'd talk and he'd always ask me if my wife had relented yet.

He would have a list of chores that he would have me do I would cut wood for him and fill his wood box to above the top. I'd work moving and changing his lights in the chapel and the building. Often I'd help him catalogue his books for the library. *When he passed away the books were just as he and I had left them the last time we'd been cataloging them.* Several times he had me write letters for him. I still have a copy of one of the letters.

It seems that every time I went to visit Father Andrei that I'd be there for at least five hours. Often I was there working for him and listening to his stories for at least seven hours at a time. I stayed overnight there several times while helping him. Once I stayed there after he had some bare rooms built there. His friend Mike Murphy did most of the building for him. They were built as a retreat for people needing a spiritual renewal.

After the work we'd sit and talk some more. Sometimes

he'd just want to talk because he didn't feel like moving much. His body was giving out and he was in lots of pain. Some of the stories he told were amazing. He and his little brother were secreted out of Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution. He was only nine years old and I believe his brother to be two years younger. His parents were of royal blood and were executed. He was basically raised in Belgium and went to school there. He told me that he knew by the time he was 18 years old that he knew he wanted to be a priest. He never knew for certain what became of his brother. He had a feeling that he may have died in Africa. When he was eighty years old, he had a spiritual experience regarding his mother. She came to him as in a dream and stayed with him for exactly one year. He felt that she needed to know that he was all right.

He told me about living in France for a time while recovering from tuberculosis once. Also he had stories of learning to speak English while in Ireland. He spoke several other languages including Spanish and Italian.

He told me about living in the Philippines and getting tuberculosis and almost dying there. He said that a nice Catholic Priest brought him to New York and consequently saved his life. He was always amazed and thankful to that priest. That is how he found his way to the United States.

He had almost been returned to Russia by the Italians during WWII. They were rounding up foreigners and especially Russians to extradite them during the war and he was one. He said that a stern faced man was waiting to interrogate him in a government room. He said this guy looked so stern that it made him laugh out loud. When he laughed the

interrogator couldn't believe that he was Russian and let him go!

He was a teacher by trade even tho a monk and he loved to teach. I suppose that is what he was doing for me. He was always lamenting about how he couldn't teach in Oregon because they wouldn't let him wear his Orthodox Robes. Anyway I came to love that old man. That one-of-a-kind monk. He would often send me notes in the mail telling me about this or that and ask how I was doing. I still have those notes.

He knew history very well, and I guess because he'd lived much of it. He's lectured in the Pentagon about the dangers and mentality of Communism and also in many auditoriums across the United States. One time he said he lectured in Pennsylvania somewhere and he made some jokes. Nobody laughed and he thought that nobody understood him or that they didn't like what he'd said. The manager of the building told him "no that they'd liked him fine." He said "they are German. They'll laugh tomorrow"..... Ha..I can still hear Father telling me that story.

He had started a Library in San Francisco similar to the one in Trail, OR but after working for years on it, he lost it. He prayed about it and eventually he traveled to this property in Trail, OR and he loved it. He had no money so he prayed. Somebody sent the money to purchase it. I'm not even certain that he ever knew who it was.

At first he had nothing there. No food even. He ate some berries and some wormy apples that were hanging on the trees around there. Times were tough for him there. They were still tough at the end. He slept on a flat bench about a foot wide for years. In fact when I first met him that's all he slept on. Later someone donated him a pew out

of a Methodist Church. He used it to sleep on. He said that he started falling off the flat bench with no sides (he was eighty something at the time!)

He had no furniture in the house with the exception of the bench and some benches for the bare kitchen table. He had a small kitchen, a small bathroom, a chapel and the rest was library



with shelves of books.

He'd drive like the wind. He loved to drive fast. He told me that he had to drive fast because life is short! He'd tease the bank tellers and waitresses by asking them if they were there just to be ornaments? One bank teller replied "both!" He loved to tell that story.

Father Andrei told me of a couple of spiritual experiences that he had. In fact I have a recording of him telling one of them. He had been in his chapel during liturgy and he had these visions of faces, little faces, looking at him. He found out that they wanted liturgy with him. He didn't deny them and found that they were sinless souls like Christ that had been aborted and baptized in their own blood (as he told it). The story can not be written in it's entirety here as it's too long but what a special person to be granted such a spiritual vision.

Another time he was at one of the places that "Our Lady" had appeared (in Italy I believe). He experienced her presence there although not by sight. I

wish that I could relate the story to you just as he told it. He was a fantastic story teller and told them with a rich variety of words.

I married Angela in July of 2000 in South Carolina and I took her up to meet Father. He welcomed her, we ate, and they spoke for some time alone. He told me to take a walk. A few weeks later Father gave a ceremony in which he blessed our marriage. He told me that I could never be married again.

I didn't get up to see him as often after I married, but still I was there from time to time. When I found out he was sick I had to wait to see him. The last time I saw Father alive was after he come home from the hospital. He was going through his papers and destroying most of them. I believe he was trying to "disappear" as he might say. I filled his wood box for him and took some of the papers to the garbage for him. He could barely speak after his throat surgery but he gave Angela and I his blessing.

The last time I was to see him was at the funeral. I called him and got a recording telling about the death, and the upcoming funeral service. I was one of a small group of people there. The few that were there were mostly clergy. The service in the chapel (I'd been to many of them) was different without Father leading it, although still beautiful.

When he was buried on the grounds that he loved I was both amazed and gratified. He loved that piece of the earth. On the anniversary of his death a group again got together for Liturgy in the chapel and while outside at the grave site a bald eagle came close and made three circles.

(Editor's Note: If you would like a transcribed copy of Father Andrei's Spiritual Experience or even a verbal copy on cassette please write me or e-mail me and I'll send you one. I also have a copy of a cute letter he wrote anonymously to the nurses in the hospital)