

Wayne Recalls Rocking and the Power of Positive Thinking

by Swanson Tudor

My mother told me I came out of her screaming and didn't stop for two years. After that I took up rocking. In the bed with my brothers, on the floor, back seat of the car, a booth at a restaurant -I never knew why. I'd get on my knees, put my forehead down, my hands behind my head and start going, side to side. They would yell, push me over, hold me down, spank me, even try to ignore it but -they couldn't stop me. That cheap K-Mart bed must have been the worst for them. I'd get a steady squeak going with the box springs in the middle of the night, after a half hour or so the old man, my mother, or both of them would come through the door turn me over and hold me down for awhile. I got to where I could do it in my sleep. The whole family would be tired and dragged out at the breakfast table; I'd be rested and ready for another energetic day of throwing fits. By the time I was four it was a rare night that I rocked since I had developed an early taste for destruction, which the practice of and the escape from punishment for, took most of my pep. I slept the whole night sound except for my occasional sleep walks, which would lead me as usual to pee in various spots inside the house. And if my mother let me out of her sight: pushing over bird baths, putting nails under tires of parked cars, tearing up flowers, breaking other kids toys, shitting in back yard sandboxes - that's what my days were made of. Every parent in a six block radius at some point made a visit to complain or threaten legal action. Sometimes a group of boys would catch up to me and lay on a beating. But I was way past learning a lesson the day I was born. "Possessed" my grandmother said when my father took his pistol and rifle to her house for safe keeping after I asked him several days

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straight if I could hold one. She told me to stay a week because she needed some practice with her strap. My folks took in a mongrel dog who soon became my pal -he would follow me on my business around the neighborhood. My dad had named him Pook but he should have called him Took -he was a natural thief and soon led me into it. Pook's specialty was stray shoes and hats kids sometimes left in their yards or on porches. Almost every day my mother would find one shoe of a pair in our backyard where Pook dropped them. She would look around to make sure no one was watching and drop it in the trash can or throw it in a leaf fire. Pook loved to steal shoes so much I even saw him pull one off a kid's foot down at the playground as the boy lay on the ground where Pook had cornered him against the ball house crying and petrified with fear. Pook never bit anyone though, except for the mailman who afterwards regularly threatened him with mace after throwing the mail in our driveway. I had been good at everything I tried until I started stealing. Things I wanted were in stores, not lying around people's yards. I never learned to ride a bike and the one time I stole one a man caught me less than a block from where I took it, running along beside. That was the problem -I always got caught. Being hard headed I didn't quit, and it lead to a life long habit of putting my future in other people's hands, mostly the police and the courts. My father once told me to stop playing like I was sane and maybe the State would send me to a mental hospital of some kind instead of jail -I was never good at seeing the big picture. I always knew that the best thing to do was what first came to mind and then stay the course. There was the time I ran away from a juvenile detention center. It was in the middle of a Midwest winter, not much above zero degrees, I ran though fields and trees and hid in an old cemetery. When they caught me I was ready to go back since I had left without my shoes and my feet were frostbitten. My mother told me my toes turned black and the doctors were talking about cutting them off —then she gave me a little tape player with cassettes by Norman Vincent Peale. Something to pass my time with. Just recently I sold some scotch tape that I claimed was windowpane acid to a

motorcycle gang called the Pagans. I never hid very well so it didn't take them long to catch up with me. They took me across the state line to a farm house in the middle of nowhere, after knocking me around they put me in the basement and tied me to a hot water pipe that burned my back and arms every time someone took a shower, which I figured they were taking for my benefit. I escaped the second night and ran through the endless acres of surrounding cornfields. I wandered in them for two days, afraid to stay near any road I came upon. In a thick band of trees between two hard furrowed fields I discovered an abandoned little shack. Maybe some bum had erected it for when he passed this way, or someone used it at one time to hide from things in their life —just like me. It was no bigger than a single bunked jail cell and had a rusted tin roof. I slept there that night. I used a stick to flick a balled up shirt matted with dirt and some shit stained newspaper out its little doorway. I lay there chewing on a cob of green corn, and listening to trucks driving by on some far off highway. I thought about money and food. I wanted to wash my hair; I don't like it when it gets oily. I thought about Pook, it would be nice to rest my head on his warm and breathing body. I couldn't remember exactly what he looked like, so I thought of other dogs I had seen lately. I dreamt a bit, I can still remember little pieces of it. Mostly it seemed to be just faces here and there, appearing in the dark and voices of people I couldn't see. But I did see myself -I was wearing a jean jacket that I once owned. It had a line of studs across the back at the shoulders; I would roll the sleeves up and wear it without a shirt in the summer. It was my lucky jacket. I had it on when I met Kuki, who was also in the dream. She was from the Philippines and half Korean. She latched on to me, I was just standing on a corner trying to think of something to do and she came up and asked what's going on, and said she liked my hair and jacket. She was a little older, and beautiful, everyone told me that. In the dream we had a room on the first floor of a building near some downtown. We had a black light, and late at night after we smoked weed Kuki would turn it on and dance naked for me. I woke up thinking of Kuki's short thick

legs. The last time I saw her she was with a black dude who had screwed me out of some money and reefer. She was wearing my jacket.

That old stuff doesn't mean much to me. I've got things to do now and tomorrow. One leads to the other. It's the power of positive thinking.

