

ANIMATOR

AND

A DEATH TIME KEEPER

KURT BURNUM

An Intaker and a Death Maker

THE STORY OF
AN INTAKER AND A DEATH
MAKER

AN INDEFINITE
ENSEMBLE
INTO THE WORLD'S
DARKEST ASSORTMENTS OF
UNSORTED TRUTH
Kurt Burnum

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ISBN13: 9781517439620
ISBN10: 1517439620

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated exclusively to my one and only big brother, Donald Burnum. A man who after serving 23 years with The West Wendover Nevada Police Force, Detective Sergeant committed suicide in the early morning hours of July 3rd, 2015.

My thoughts and prayers along with all of his family will be there for him in all of his endeavors regard less. Forever, and in all ways. As for the many people whose lives that have been touched by him along the way, he will always be remembered by us for that.

That means that this book, "AN IN TAKER AND A DEATH MAKER. AN INDEFINITE ENSEMBLE TO THE WORLDS UNSORTED TRUTH" is dedicated by me solely as a memorial to him. Maybe now he will rest with the knowledge of being ever so loved? Even up until this very day.

And because of that, we will carry his memories with us forever, and he will always be missed and never forgotten by us. His friends and family of whom he so hastily has left behind. And, for whatever reason he deemed necessary to take his own life, one that was so dear and precious to all of us, and to so many others regardless of what their needs may've been at that time.

I hope that all of this has the same meaning to us as it does to all of them, and that whatever pain he may've been in is now over with. But, I will miss you until the day I see you again Big Brother. But, until that day comes, please carry on in good faith and in good hope for the future.

Whatever, and however you see fit for it to be. Whatever it is that God still holds in store for all of us we will be well. But until then, in good faith and in good time until the day that I can see you again! "May the Blessings Be?"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My Acknowledgements go out to the rest of the immediate families that have fallen victim as prey to whatever it is that haunts the inner crevices and dark alley ways of West Wendover, Nevada. A tourist Community.

MONUMENTAL ACQUITTAL

This wasn't just another lackluster suicide out on an empty highway pull off into the high desert of The Sierra Nevada Mountain range located just outside of the town of West Wendover Nevada. Not just another cop out on the beat either. He was my only older brother Donald Burnum who was just about to retire. Who, as it seemed, couldn't bare to live one more second in order to get to his retirement. And so because of that there lay my brother in the front cab of his well loved Toyota Pickup Truck shot. All by himself in god knows which way but it was to the head.

So, what was responsible for it? The Dispatcher?

Another Officer? The one's he'd been sleeping with? Or, maybe even both, but for some reason my older brother, Donald decided to take his own life on July the 3rd in the early morning darkness, next to the highway outside of city limits in his prized king cab, four door 4x4 long bed Toyota Taco, (Or better known to those without one as a Taco ma.)

That lead me up to the first time that I came into contact with my brother's drinking habit myself which know seems to be quite a long time ago. Way back in 2004 or maybe 2005. It's been so long I can hardly remember which. The only reason I did remember or knew at all was because it was around the same time period just after I had received my Social Security Disability checks that finally came long after I had suffered many losses and control over my own life to the hand of Schizo Affective Disorder.

During this time period though it was about spring, maybe fall but not quite midsummer yet and definitely not during the winter. That I would know because the small pond up a 14 mile switchback mountain forest road up to the top of the hill where a small waterfall cascaded down a rocky cliff into what was knows as, "Angel Lake". Dammed off from running down the mountain before being coralled into a small pond free of moss and sea weed due to its constant overflow. It amounted in size to be just big enough to put a small stock of trout into.

They would stock it mostly with trout, had a few camp sites, outdoor toilets, and a rangers station. Perfect spot to spend all day getting drunk on cheap beer where as I was just coming off of a long time drinking habit of my own, but in this case wasn't really allowed by any of my family members who were taking care of me at the time.

The only reason that they allowed me a good time up at the lake that day was due to the fact they were on their way that day anyway and I had just so happened to call my brother earlier that morning and asked if they were doing anything that day. At first he acted like it was just another ordinary day but since I happened to call an opportune time I was somehow able to talk him into letting me go. Explaining that, "It would just be an outing for me without a fishing pole or license."

Probably because he was eager to start to drink and taking time out at the lake and dealing with going through the trouble of outfitting me with a pole and fishing license would take up all of his BBQ and drinking time.

It seemed to me to be that going through the time consuming process of taking care of me while I waited for the determination of my Social Security Disability benefits were made possible by the fact that I had spent the previous year living in with my, "Not so little sister"

Melissa.

Better known as, "Missy" as we grew up six years apart, and who know was A.K.A Lyssa. Last name Thomp son this time. Four kids and all from separate marriages which is kind of ironic considering that since we only shared the same mother I really wasn't a member of The Burnum family started off by my mother adopting us boys, Donald and I off to this guy Frank Lee Burnum. Probably knowing my mother just to make sure that my real father, Steve Neslen would never see nor have any rights to that of being a father to us boys. A deal I would've taken myself knowing what I know now about how, "Married with Children" turns out to work. Meaning they cheat, collect child support and claim abuse while the whole time collecting welfare and 18% of every dime that you make.

Which in my case was okay because I had a job dealing cards where my paycheck which was usually minimal due to the taxes with held from them was substantial due to the tips that I made dealing the blackjack tables. My \$400 in rent that I was paying the owner of The Hotel Nevada to use his furnished apartment that he had stashed just across the street one block back and kitty corner to the club itself right next to the parking lot for the establishment. One that came to rest behind the building which faced the Main Street or Altman Street. The Main Drag. The last 18% of it went to my exwife for child support.

But back to the divorce part of my parents story. That had all happened a very long, long time ago but I never knew just how long my mother could carry a grudge un til it came time to burry Donald in the summer of 2015. You see, Steve had a family plot. One where Donald could've been buried with some type of respect in a cemetery considering that The West Wendover Police Department and the town of West Wendover, Nevada wanted nothing to do with an honorable cops funeral.

First, he wasn't even on the job when it happened and it seemed that his personal affairs were happening on the job with more than one employee of which he was in command. As a Detective Sergeant, he could tell them what to do which worked out in his favor, but my sister and her father were the ones who ended up with the ashes after the cremation that only they wanted and not what my father and I had wanted. To be buried on a family plot. As far as killing himself went. You see, my wife Celeste, and I stayed in touch with Donald on a regular basis. Something that was a fairly recent arrangement. Donald and I didn't get along.

One time while still in High School I called his girl friend a, "Bitch" for not saying hi to me back as him and her casually strolled past me through the living room on their way to Donald's bedroom at the back of the apartment. He let it slide until she wasn't around and then at tacked me like a wild animal as I lay on the couch half asleep. The same place I spent all of my days and nights with all of my cloths stacked high up against the back wall above the back of the couch because I couldn't even share the bedroom with him like we had done when we were kids all because of her.

Violence seemed to be becoming a common de nominator with Donald in his relationships with other people except for his glued to the hip girlfriend Charlotte Eckins who, supposedly at the hand of her father, a craps dealer who just seemed to like to drink a few beers before coming home form work in one of the Casinos in town had been abusive with her. Supposedly anyhow. I think it was because he disapproved of Donald in the first place.

So the violence that Mr. Frank Lee Burnum. (Our adopted step father.) inflicted upon my brother and myself as small children now stared to come out in his relation ships in his grown up lifestyle. He eventually married Charlotte, bought a small house on her grand parents co sign that gave poor old Donald a leg up giving him credit. He soon after landed the job of being The Animal Control Officer for the police department after a few stints in some dead end Casino jobs. But like all others ended up moving form one department to the other just trying to fit in.

But he never drank back then either. Not as long as he was with Charlotte who definitely wouldn't allow it and she kept him from his smoking habit trying to distance her self as far away from the life of her mother and father who made a living working in the clubs in town. By clubs I mean Casino's. So, Charlotte finally had gotten her way.

Donald was finally out of the casinos and had what looked like the beginning of a career in law enforcement. Then, after graduating from the academy was a made an officer with the small police force in West Wendover Nevada. She kept very expensive porcelain dolls in very expensive display cases and wanted children of her own. Something Donald couldn't bring himself to do stating that,

"The World was to bad of a place for children to grow up with." So his beloved Charlotte began a relationship to an other person who she went on to marry and of course, have children together. This soured Donald and showed us that he loved her so much yet he was reluctant to give her children because of that. He acted very strange at times and I often wondered how he continued on climbing he ranks of The West Wendover Police Force.

TOWN CONSTRUCTION

At this point, I digress. I want to talk mostly about how the west side of town even came into being because when my family first arrived in town in 1979 there wasn't anything on that side of the town at all!

They started constructing trucks tops with gambling halls connected to them, a few brand name casino's like, "The Gold Rush" where the quarter arcade was open whenever we were giving cash. This place soon after opening with its beautiful banquet style restaurant that featured this huge wagon wheel style chandelier that covered the entire center section of the center of the room spilling over onto the gold motif of the brass and gold painted and soft white light seemed to me to be a Mayan Mecca now that I look back on it but was soon taken over by The Peppermill Casino. A large corporation out of Reno Nevada who was all too willing to employ the immigrants from Zackatekas Mexico who seemed to band together, work for low wages and provide a high quality of work and who would stay away out of the clubs and casino's because they sent all their money back to Mexico where down there they could live like Kings on the wages they were making in America and they were highly territorial.

They worked mostly behind the scenes. The customer service employees were usually white which is where my mother fit in. Forced to work for an expansion of the oldest club in town called, "The State Line Casino". Left over from the days back when the greatest war on earth was underway the 509th fighter bomber group was set to train there at a large air base. The same fighter bomber squadron that dropped the atomic bombs over Japan.

Even the famous Enola Gay. So the chamber of commerce built a small park in the center of town and put up a memorial to Corinel Tibits which inevitably started to become the names of the streets that tourists in town would normally find. Like the one around the 18 hole golf course, "The Vista Butte" Golf Course which was surrounded by Tibits St. and so on. They would even have the 509th reunions at The State Line Casino there until most of the 509th had been and had now gone. They even had in a glass display the world land speed record model cars and their drivers with a few small sentiments about the car, driver, the class it was in and so on and so forth.

But mom ended up working for a brand new casino that was made in the area where the semitrucks would park their vehicles and frequent the shows, showers, and entertainment that went on in these joints. When they first opened the doors the people who were set to work there had already dubbed it, "The Brass Ass" because of all the brass that was used as railing on the cement staircases that lead into this particular place.

It's real name was, "The Silver Smith" because the family that owned the Casino were The Smith family. They spared no amenity, but were scrutinized when they put in some very expensive carpet throughout the casino with the big logo, "SS" and some people didn't like the implications of a Nazi Orientation but still, the carpet remained.

Donald actually started off working in the same place that I did. A little 52 space RV park that sat just across the parking terrace from the casino on the Utah side of the state line. One that had no pull through spaces available and the KOA on the other side of town was bigger and featured showers and pull through spaces for less money. They were only charging \$8 with a, "Good Sam" membership where if you wanted to discount at the RV parks that were affiliated

with, "Good Sam" then you had to have The Good Sam sticker in your window of a little guy and a member card with a number on it. \$12.90 without, and \$11.70 for members. I even remember pointing out to the boss that the RV park directory didn't even have us listed in its pages. That was soon changed with a new lower rate and a full page insert into the RV Park Directory. Donald worked there for a while.

I really don't remember which, but that day on the lake was a real eye opener into what my brother had become. We were raised together until our parents were divorced in 1986 when I was 12. When that happened and I found out that the man wasn't even my real father and the many beatings I took at the hands of Frank Lee Burnum mostly for no apparent reason other than my sister liked to watch me get beat.

She would do things like gouge her nails into my arms until I make her stop. Then she'd wake up dad and tell him that I kicked her in the chest or something ridiculous like that and then he would come out of his cage and proceed to physically and mentally abuse me. Slapping me and knocking me down where he would continue to strike me explaining the whole time that, "Kicking my sister in the chest could kill her."

With little regard for my own safety or mental state of mind. All of this going on while mom was still at the club after working grave yard all night and gambling until mid afternoon. They both did except for Frank worked an 8 to 5 hourly shift repairing heavy equipment. A trade he had learned in the army, and which was the reason for moving to this dead end trailer park hidden on the other side of the tracks next to the over pass where the train would go through. I remember falling asleep to the clickity clack of the freight trains that would laboriously make their way through town slowly putting me to sleep at night.

It was so desolate at that time that people had to create things like slings that would rock back and forth across the tracks so when the train would come you could swing across before it hit you just to see how close you could get to it without being hit and killed.

For some strange reason there were a lot of suicides in the trailer park and it wasn't even that big! It was a park named Jim's Trailer Park. For what reason I have no idea other than there used to be an old Casino named Jim's Casino just up the hill across the tracks for the trailer court. I also remember my mother taking me there and ordering me French Toast. My favorite thing and only thing on the menu that I could remember. Other than that, I had no idea.

AN INDEFINITE ENSEMBLE OF THE TRUTH

They tore the place down though. It along with the small one room cell jailhouse that they kept around incase they had one and needed for the county to come pick them up for what ever reason in a town where anything goes. But, we were just kids. The older kid next door shot him self for no apparent reason as a child, but that was followed shortly up by Big Jim Doherty turning one of his fathers many guns on himself as his father being a gun smith and all was easy to find the right caliber to punch a inch and a half white hole from one temple through to the other, and out the other side. Good thing he was right handed because then they could display the body in the proper formal way of showing the open casket from the right of the deceased where a band aid looking sticker was pasted over the wound and a much larger one on the other side. I remember it vividly.

My parents certainly weren't going to bring me so I did what I always did. I rode my bicycle where I was made to be felt like I wasn't wanted. You see, Jim Doherty was quite a big guy. His dad was the box man at The State Line Casino and it didn't get much more respectable than that during those years. Of which I only found out later when I went to work in the same gambling pit as him. Just not on the craps table side of the table games floor area known as , "The Pit". Something that which, "The Brass Ass" took literally and sunk their pit into a lowered level form the slot ma chines where you actually had to decent a four foot flight of stairs if you wanted to play at the tables! For some reason that didn't last long and one day they up and raised the floor up to the same level as the slot machines because the drunks and cocktail waitresses were tripping and falling down these four rung flights of stairs. A lot of good that would do so they raised it. I started working for the company when I was close the end of my 14th year of living.

AN INDEFINITE ENSEMBLE OF THE TRUTH

A CREATURE OF REMEMBRANCE

Happy as a clam That Little Jim Doherty had shot himself. I found great pleasure in that being as he was very large, very strong, and very mean person. He even turned and struck me head on in the face busting my nose for the first time spraying blood everywhere across the room. It just so happened to be the end of the 3rd morning quarter biology class where I sat next to him that day.

I can't remember if the seats were assigned or even how it was that I ended up directly behind him considering that I was one row to his right and the desk/chair combination that they used in High School during those days. (I don't know if they even do but I'm pretty sure they do.) that opened to the left and I was seated to his right. Any way, long story short, the teacher asked if I wanted to press charges and I declined.

Later I heard that he had beaten someone severely because he loved to fight and then defecated on the man as he lay there bleeding. His downfall? A stupid older girl friend who introduced him to cocaine at such a young age and failed to explain the rules of the drug community. The ones right next to, "There are no rules, and its winner take all in the drug business.

Same as with the gambling. He didn't realize that he had fallen in love with a coke addict with a craving for younger men. So I'm guessing she enjoyed that little tidbit of information as much as I did. I even got to attend the funeral and see him lying there. Dead. With that same stupid looking smirk upon his face and seeing that bullet hole in the side of his head was just icing on the cake.

In fact, I enjoyed every little minute of it thoroughly before leaving without the conclusion of being a pal bearer or anything like that. I just hopped on my bike and road my ass home. That has got to be one of my top ten favorite memories of all time. I mean it was sweet! That meant that the suicide rate was pretty high all things considered in this tumble weed town still only known as Wendover.

The strange thing is, people from that era and part of town still seem to be getting bumped off one by one in the strangest of ways. Like the two sisters who's first names will not be revealed but they both ended up in the same car that got into an accidental crashed their car just outside of town after finishing a road trip.

It was the older sister and the younger sister by not much who somehow swerved off of the highway, over-corrected and rolled the car however many times it takes to roll a car of that type traveling at that speed would flip out in the wide open country of mostly sage and strange rock formations of one type or another.

The first, older sister survived, but the youngest. the prettiest, the one with the least amount of baggage and the most potential for the one with ambition and intentions of going to college of which she had been grooming herself for, for years. At least 9 years in the making or something crazy like that.

Another West Wendover Jim's Trailer Park residents of my own age who just so happened to be a girl Vicki Carson who lived kitty corner from our lot. A young girl who was killed some how

some where in a rumor that was true just not full of all the facts of another car accident.

The truth was. "She was gone for good and there was no getting her back either." No matter how minuscule it might seem to be at the time. It's just not something that you can penetrate clean through to the other side.

Unless, of course you were dead also. A place that we hear so much about but have never been to, seen any pictures of or shown any roads or sign posts to it's location along the way. Just a general idea about where you go when you get there with a rendition that you get from people who've been living there before.

Or at least I guess have been there before anyway. My points buy the way is that, "The suicide, and death rate among the children of that trailer park was in my mind, pretty high! Cursed by the ground that they walked on. Nobody really knows what happened to the airforce base that was left over from WWII on the east side of the Utah state line and its extensive state of decay.

They did keep the same very large tarmac and a few hangers left over of many. Some of an extremely large caliber in good condition but most of what was left over from the WWII era was destroyed in the making of the film, "The Philadelphia Experiment" where they blew the whole place up!

Several Movies had been partially filmed in the dead end town of Wendover. Nicolas Cage showed up for ConAir, as I mentioned they destroyed the airforce base in, "The Philadelphia Experiment", and probably a few others that I've failed to mention along the way likes of Will Smith in "Independence Day" which brought such attention to the big screen. The one that I find to be the most sticking of them all was the, "B" flick movie named, "Money Plays" that starred Roy Scheider, (The man from, "Jaws"), Sonia Braga, and a few people that I know personally. One by the name of John Buchanan.

Or, at least that's what everybody knew of him around town thought his name was, and of course, the kicker, Teddy Castanzo. The same Teddy Castanzo who had his 16 year old daughter, "Mickey Costanzo" who was murdered in cold blood back in 2012 by some other High School Students Kody Patten, serving life without parole. Right along with his cohort and fiancée' Toni Fratto.

A supposed, "Beauty Queen!" around town. Fact was, I worked in close quarters with Teddy Castanzo on several different jobs over several different years. I even paid him \$200 dollars to go to his school to teach people how to deal the game of craps because Teddy was the most prolific craps dealer that I ever met. The absolute best. He tried to teach me some tricks but when it came right down to it he actually threw me to the wolves.

Instead of having some practice time learning to play the game he shoved me into the deep end and watched me drown. That never bothered me too much after the fact that I had escaped that entire mess but Donald? He was the lead detective on the case which came with headlines on shows like, "Deadly Women" and also on, "Date Line" Why he couldn't handle it is still a mystery to me in my book because he had everything anyone could ask for. But, I guess he decided to railroad his carrier by sleeping with the office staff and, of course drinking.

Something of which Donald could not control. Not in the sense that he couldn't stop for a while

but more along the lines that he couldn't handle his alcohol. Which brings me back to that day up at Angel Lake where he was incredibly insulting to a friend of his that he had brought along as a fishing buddy from the fire department. The things that my brother was saying to this man would've sent most men over the edge and punched him in the mouth but this guy? This guy was a young oriental gentleman who held his tongue and played it off as if it were all a big joke or something. That's when I realized that my brother's drinking problem wasn't about quantity but more along the lines of quality. Truth is, "He couldn't handle his liqueur which, between the lovers triangle, his job and retirement, and now finally the right moment and having a gun by his side at the right time while being drunk. He pulled the trigger without any thought for any of us who loved him so much. Just for those who got what they wanted.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Ely, Nevada, Kurt Burnum grew up in a small town not far from Salt Lake City, Utah. Graduating from White Pin High School in 2002 he led the life of a black jack dealer in the northeastern Nevada Casinos such as the Hotel Nevada an ambling Hall in downtown Ely. Currently living in the high desert of southern California he resides with his wife and lifelong partner, Celeste, and their six year old cat, Gabriel.