

(The View from the Palos Verdes Hills)

Lawrence Leland Lee Jr.

You're probably wondering what a nice kid from southern California is doing in a place like this. Well, I guess I'm wondering too. I didn't plan it this way but most of my life seems to have been unplanned. Maybe that's the legacy that I inherited from my dad.

My dad, now there was a guy that made things happen and I don't think he would have been where I'm sitting now. He was a wheeler-dealer that made it up as he went along. I know most of this from the family stories and things that other people have told me because, while I'm sure that he loved me, he really never had time for me. I was the afterthought. Born ten years too late to have been a priority to him. Still, he did saddle me with a pretentious name and did his best to provide for me. At least he provided for me in his own way.

I guess that I'm closer to my mom but she was the same way. She could travel around the world on fifteen minutes notice and as long as she had her hands full of dad's coattails she was happy. I had a brother but he was ten years older so we were never really friends. In fact, when I got to know him, I didn't like him very much.

So where did my twisting road start? Well, I guess that it started in a dusty Texas town a long time ago.

Alvarez Texas -1906.

My dad, Lawrence Leland Lee had a way about him that gave him certain advantages. He made friends quickly, gained the trusts of others and generally got his way. He had grown up in a catholic orphanage in that tiny farm town and, somehow, he had turned it into a positive experience. When he 'aged-out' of the orphanage at sixteen he convinced the sisters that they should keep him on as a handy-man and provide him with room and board. It didn't matter that they had never needed a full time handyman in the past, they were glad to have him.

For two months he had hung around the town square or spent his time in the local pool hall. At first he imagined that he could hustle a few bucks with a pool stick but he quickly learned the he wasn't good enough. This didn't deter him and he made side bets on other peoples play. This pastime provided him with plenty of spending money which he squealed away in a box kept under his mattress.

It was hot in Alvarez as Labor Day approached. He knew that few farmers paid any attention to this twenty year old holiday on the first Monday in September but there would be a tractor parade and a town picnic in the park. A dusty farmer stamped into the pool hall and quickly found an RC Cola in the icebox near the door. The farmer was pissed off and he didn't care who knew it.

"God damned leaches ... now what am I supposed to do with all of them god damned melons!"

