

(The True and Uncensored Story of the Catastrophe at Tapu Vana)

Lara Lee

Here I am, on a beach working on my suntan and trying to figure out how things went so wrong. It wasn't like it was my fault although lots of things that have gone wrong in my life have been my fault. Like the time I was arrested for being drunk on the beach and my Uncle Chris had me thrown into the drunk-tank at the jail. That was defiantly my fault.

Where did it start?

My name is a mouthful. I'm Lara Lynn Langtree Lee and my brother is Lavern Lucas Lee. You're probably getting the idea that we have lots of L's in our names. Maybe it's because our dad's name is Lawrence Leland Lee Jr. and our mother has the lovely name Laska Lara Langtree Lee. I think that Laska is the most beautiful name in the world.

If you believed some of the things that people have said about me, you would think that I was just another spoiled, rich kid, raised by over-achieving parents who had more money than time for their only daughter. Mom and dad are over-achievers and they are rich but they had plenty of time for me. In fact, they had more time for me and my brother than we wanted.

In many ways my family is just like most families. You know one dad, one mom, and a few grandparents. My brother Luke is a couple of years older than me and we have a bunch of aunts, uncles, and cousins who aren't really related to us. I had dogs and cats and a horse when I was a kid. If we had lived in a nice, three bedroom house on a quiet street in the suburbs we would be your typical family. But we didn't.

I grew up in a big Spanish ranch house on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. That cliff is the western edge of the Palos Verdes hills near Redondo Beach California. Even that nice beach town might be considered normal if it was anywhere except in the greater Los Angeles area. You know, LA, La-La land, the capitol of the world's largest collection of fruits and nuts. Still, we might have been fairly normal if we had nothing to do with that other LA suburb, Hollywood, but that didn't happen either.

Ok, see if you can follow this. My mom and dad grew up on the cliff that I told you about and they were nearly next-door neighbors. Mom is a year older than dad and when they were kids, she thought that he was a pain in the butt. There were some other boys in the neighborhood and they became my uncles.

When my parents got out of high school, daddy went to college at USC and mom went to work for a movie studio. My grandfather helped her get the job. That was dad's dad and he knew everyone in Hollywood. Anyway, she liked the job and she met all the big movie stars from those black and white films. Dad said that he really loved my mom from the very start but she wouldn't give him the time of day. Well, since they are my parents, I knew that somehow they fell in love. After the war mom and dad made a fortune building houses all over Southern California and my brother Luke was born in

1947 and I came along in 1949. I think right now I need a cool drink to go with my suntan.

Growing up in La-La Land

Growing up in a big house overlooking the ocean was a really cool thing. Mom and dad told me that when they were kids, the house had been part of a big farm even though they called it a ranch. Dad built a hundred houses on most of the ranch but the cliff top houses and grounds were left alone. Today everyone calls it the Lee Compound. There are two houses on the cliff top with a big open area of grass and trees in between. There is the ranch house where dad grew up and, what we call, the Palos Verdes house where mom grew up.

When I was a kid I would climb down the cliff to the little cove and go swimming and fishing and I wanted to do everything that my big brother did. He used to tell me to go find some girls to play with but he really didn't mean it. He was lots of fun then and he still is.

You might have thought that rich kids like us would have gone to a fancy private school but our parents wanted us to have the same experiences that they did. I'm sure that times have changed a lot from the early '30' to the '50's and '60's but they didn't care. They put us on the school bus every morning and we were sent into the world.

I was two years behind Luke as we went through the same schools as mom and dad. Luke was a junior when I started at Redondo High but we still rode to school together and we often hung out together. Sometimes he was a little too protective and if he didn't like any of my friends he let me know it.

He wasn't very social and he didn't have many dates in school but I was just the opposite. Mom made me wait until I was sixteen before dating but I made up for lost time in a hurry. Some of the guys that I went out with were defiantly not on Luke's list of favorite people. I know that on at least one occasion that led to a fight that broke the nose of my guy and after that he wanted nothing to do with me. I was mad as hell at my brother but I still love him.

Luke graduated and went off to USC and when I started my junior year I was on my own. Free at last so I bought new clothes and made new friends. These two things led to one of the most embarrassing event in my young life. I guess that it made me a stronger person but the value of the lesson was lost on me at the time.