

Beginning in the summer of 1975, Steve and his friends, known as the Black Sheep discover a graveyard in the ruins of Blanchard Town and it's ghostly guards. What happens next is a dangerous and humorous story of discovery and friendship.

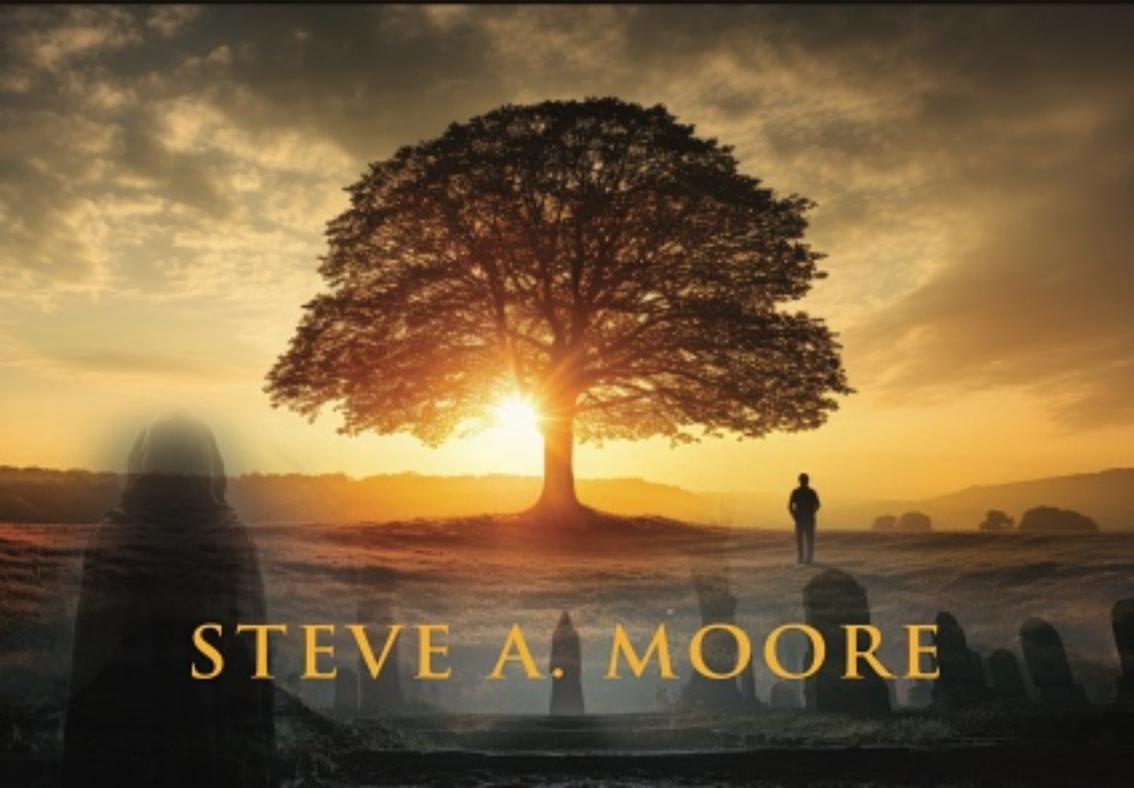
Here and No Further: A Memoir for the Boys

By Steve A. Moore

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HERE AND NO FURTHER

A Memoir for the Boys



STEVE A. MOORE

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Chapter 1: The Triangle

Most people in the Triangle never went anywhere very far. The furthest trip would have been either to Myrtle Beach or Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Some people might go to Atlanta or Charlotte, but not anyone that I knew.

All I knew was what I saw around me, read in books, or watched on TV. Storytelling was still a big part of how the people in our area came to understand who they were and about our history.

The radio was very important to us. Everyone had their favorite disc jockeys, and there were still a lot of things that had to be heard on the radio if you wanted to listen to them live, — like car racing and baseball. Waiting to hear our favorite song on the radio could take hours.

Listening to the popular music of the day helped us understand the world beyond what we could not see for ourselves.

There was nothing quite like singing, “Take Me Home, Country Roads,” as the sun went down on a crisp fall evening.

I didn’t believe that there was really such a thing as a home of my own before I turned twelve years old. But things changed this year because, whether I knew it or not, I had been rescued from a hellish existence by the most unlikely person possible.

His name was Wilson. All of my friends and I called him “the Ghost” because he pretty much stayed hidden in his room and then he would come out and scare us all and then go back to hiding. He had married my mom, and that was a game changer.

Wilson had been around our family for years and though he could be scary he was also funny and wise. He loved us in his own way.

I don't know if this is true in the real hell or not, but I had no idea I was there until long after I got out.

When my family moved into our new home, the outside still looked a little like a construction site. That was fine with me because I was always looking for a place to play with my army men. I do believe now that twelve is a little old for army men. But not back then.

Imagination was all we had, and the television only had two good channels and one bad. There were no video games, no internet, or cable. All of that stuff came much later. All we had back then was the great outdoors, and that meant making up our own entertainment in any way possible.

The first thing I realized about our new home was that it was a part of a small kingdom that all of us would come to call the Triangle. The neighborhood would become the world for us.

This small little place nestled between two dots on a map that had the names, Arkwright and Canaan. It was south of Arkwright and north of Canaan. So, we called it "UCLA"—Upper Canaan and Lower Arkwright. UCLA was just below Fair Forest Creek.

Back in the day, the area around the creek was used as a dump for the city. You could hardly tell that when we moved there. You did see the occasional tire in the creek and other rusting metal objects. The bulk of the old dump was hidden beneath kudzu.

Kudzu was the unofficial vine of UCLA. It grew like crazy and it was very hard to kill. For the most part, people just ignored it. In the summertime it was full of black and yellow "Charlottes" or garden spiders. These giant spiders were pretty harmless but scary as they

could be. No one wanted one of those on their skin, harmless or not. The kudzu was to be avoided whenever possible.

The Triangle, as you would imagine, consisted of three main roads. The one my family lived on was Hemlock Drive. Hemlock Drive ran between the Highway 295 bypass and Old Canaan Church Road. Old Canaan Church Road split off to the right and Hemlock Drive was on the left and also went down to Old Canaan Road. These roads formed our little triangle, and there were other smaller roads shooting off of Hemlock.

All of the houses looked pretty much the same. Single-story ranch houses with each having slight variations like paint color, shutters and the size of the porches.

Just outside the neighborhood were other places that every one of us would come to know well: Abernathy's Store was to the extreme south and Page's Lake, which was across Highway 295 to the north. Those two locations were off-limits for us early on, but later it was pretty common for us to go there.

Mrs. Abernathy was a wonderful lady who showed a lot of patience with us. She would remember us all by name no matter how much time had passed since our last visit. It really was uncanny. Abernathy's was our safe haven. It was such a little place that represented the big hearts of everyone around. It was a meeting place, a place where you would always run across a friend.

I have no bad memories there—maybe some bittersweet memories now, but at the time all of us boys loved it. To be there was to be safe. No harm could reach us there.

The crossroads in front of the store were not dangerous. The church sat right across the street. That was a safe place as well. The church had a field where anyone could play football. It's where Barry broke his

collarbone and where I was nearly stung to death by bees, but God stepped in.

If I walked out my front door and into the small woods across the street, I could get over to Old Canaan Church Road.

Across that road was the cow pasture. Through a spot in the barbed-wire fence and into the pasture awaited a whole other world.

The hill that went down to the creek I called “Bunker Hill” and down to the creek that I called “Bull Run.” You see, I named everything after some place in history—mostly American history.

Crossing Bull Run was the dairy farm. The dairy farmer—that was his name—was a nice man, and he allowed us to walk around in his pasture and hang out at the creek. It was a lot nicer and much more well-kept than the Fair Forest Creek. It was not as wild and much smaller.

We would spend a good bit of time there in the summer. It was always a bit cooler at the creek. The creek was very shallow. It had a sand and small-rock bottom that you could see pretty much everywhere. This small little oasis in our world was always just right there, and only the barbed-wire fence slowed our conveyance coming and going.

The extreme border to the southwest of the Triangle was the railroad track. The railroad was a strictly forbidden place for us kids. The draw of the trains, the rocks, the iron spikes (if found by our parents, they were a dead giveaway that one of us had been there), and of course the adventure that the tracks represented compelled us to risk everything just to go there.

Those rails had seen so much—like stationary reverberations of a bygone era. There was just something about them.

That place, just like everywhere else around us, had a history. That history, like so many others, seemed sad. Like the wailing of a mother that has lost her children, the steel rail called out to us as if we could save them.

Everywhere we went there was the possibility for the supernatural to occur out of nowhere, and that was easily handled. It was not, however, easily handled to be caught there by any living person because that meant our parents might hear about it.

When we risked going to forbidden places, it required us to stay as stealthy as possible—hiding from every shadow and every sound. Somehow or another this was supposed to be fun.

Ole Weird Harold especially liked the railroad for reasons none of us could really understand. It is rather fitting that I point out my friend Harold first in this story. He was, as his name describes, weird.

He also embodied all the weirdness about ourselves somehow.

I believe to him those rails represented a way out of the Triangle—a way out in a dream where, if he jumped on the train one day, it would take him away on a one-way trip that would never return. Maybe he saw a life out there beyond the horizon where the tracks faded from view as somehow better than his present life.

Out of all of us kids, Harold was the most restless. He just had to escape somehow. But how far could you escape? Even the railroad track ends somewhere. Where it ended was a mystery to us, and the mysteries of life are what make life worth it.

If I knew where every road ended and how every journey would turn out, then what a boring life that would be. Risking getting run over by the train to jump on it while it was moving would never be done by anyone who knew it would end in tragedy.

Missing out on that feeling of a rushing heart and of the fear right before success is not substituted by anything else. I needed to feel reckless sometimes so that I would know that I was alive.

Page's Lake was really off-limits because it was across Highway 295, Ole Weird Harold and I were the only ones who went there regularly. Mrs. Page would allow us boys to hang out a little, but she was more business-like. She ran a pay-for-fishing lake. I liked to fish for catfish, and this was the place for that, I guess. The lake was always pretty busy in the summertime.

At the wide end of the Triangle were the pines. The pines were just that—a lot of pines with a road that ran in-between. That curvy little road was called Blanchard Town Road. It ran down to a small hamlet called, guess what? Blanchard Town.

As many times as I went through that little place when I first moved there, I never saw anyone outside. It always felt haunted. The place looked like, at one time, it was a busy and happy place. Now it just looked deserted.

One thing was for sure: you never went through there without feeling like someone was watching you. This is where Old Man Blanchard lived, and I had heard to stay away from him and his property. He was the meanest man alive according to local folklore. Some people said if he caught you, he would kill you just as soon as look at you.

The distance from the Triangle to Blanchard Town was just over a mile, and that was just fine with us.

The woods were the places where I and my friends spent most of our time. The woods were north of the Triangle between us and the highway. The highway was close in places but not that close. Our feet were not to touch the highway. That was strictly forbidden by all the parents in the neighborhood.

Fair Forest Creek and the swamp were before the highway, so those natural barriers made it very difficult to get to the highway anyway.

That was a good thing.

The woods were hidden from all eyes, and it was our territory. No one entered or exited without us somehow being aware. Plus, Bigfoot probably lived in there somewhere. The neighborhood kids had an unspoken contract with Bigfoot: we don't bother him and he won't bother us.

If you crossed Old Canaan Road at the creek, that was Old Man Blanchard territory. Not only was it agreed that he might catch us there, it was also known that the place was as haunted as a haunted house at Halloween—except for made-up ghosts. These ghosts were real. No one that ventured there at night ever returned.

That little spot of land and the people in it made up our world. I grew up poor but rich in many ways. No matter where you looked, you would find strong-willed and able-bodied people. That was their common identity. They were independent of mind, and that meant they would be themselves and didn't care much what other people might think.

I and the folks around me may have been poor and never owned a lot, but what we did own was ours.

Back then, the grass seemed so much greener. The people were happier, the road was harder, and the sky was a pale blue in the morning and then turned into that kind of deep Carolina blue found only here in the late evening.

This is the place where our many adventures occurred. This is where I felt loved. It is also where we fought one another, laughed, cried, and sang to our hearts' content on my front porch—the same porch where

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my mom would turn on the light at 10 p.m. to let us know it was time to come home.

It was a small place as big as the universe.

It was home. The first one I ever had.

We are poor little lambs / that have lost our way / Baa baa baa -

The Whiffenpoof Song

Chapter 2: The Black Sheep

Southern people always had a bit of hurt about them. Truly Southern people had a determination built on a past that represented defeat.

I think that many Southerners fought so hard in the wars that followed the Civil War just trying to either make up for the defeat or to live up to the legends. Once the people were proud people and once, they were also defeated.

Proud but beaten was an odd combination that would cause a depth of emotion from those closest to the defeat than those years removed. But those closest to it instilled in their children and grandchildren a determination built on the stories passed down through the generations.

Those stories of courage and resilience kept us pushing for a better tomorrow no matter the odds. But the one thing us kids knew more than anything else was that we could never be beaten again—no matter what flag we were fighting under, no matter who was fighting beside us. We just couldn't go down ever again.

And that was transferred over to everything and largely to college football.

Southern teams had to win against all comers but especially to any Yankee team. When Saturdays in the fall rolled around, everyone

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would flock to stadiums or to the radio or sometimes even to the television and watch the great battles play out and cheer till our hearts burst. We had to know, just know, that even if the score was not what we wanted we still could never be beaten—no matter the cost and no matter the reality. We had to know we went down swinging.

Nothing made us fight harder than when we were either not supposed to fight and just give up or the odds were so great that the possibility of success was slim. Everybody loves the underdog. We may lose a game but being beaten was not ever considered. Losing was hateful to me and my friends.

When I saw the news of the day about Vietnam and that we were losing, I could not accept that. I just could not believe that our mighty nation could lose at anything. I was sure that if we just buckled down, we could win this one. But that didn't happen, and the news made it seem like we were just giving up.

Every night Walter Cronkite would have a map of South Vietnam and the advancing communist army moving further south all but unabated. All of this was beyond what my young mind could handle, and it just felt bad.

As for me, I could never give in. I set out to win and never ever would I just give up—even if others may think I have, they didn't know. It wasn't over. I might be from a little old place and never been anywhere, but that also meant that I would make a stand right here. I would never give it up.

Here and no further.

That attitude carried me all of my life. Even when the expanding years took me away from home and into distant lands, I carried my home with me.

Just like a lot of kids, we had a secret club. We called ourselves the Black Sheep. That name was from a TV show that was on at the time. The show was about fighter pilots in World War Two. That was pretty cool. So, we were to be just as cool.

The Black Sheep were more of an idea than an actual group, but what it really meant was that we were family and we would never abandon one another. We had no real chain of command, but I was the leader of the group for the most part. Afterall, I came up with the name.

Leader would be a very loose translation of the word. I was just the glue that kept us from breaking apart. It seemed like I was always the negotiator, listener, arranger, supporter, confidant, planner, reasoner, etc. I mean, I was just as crazy sometimes, but I wasn't as crazy most of the time as some of the others.

All of the kids around liked me. I wasn't as athletic as my brother or as talented. But for some reason my brother was content with just being himself. When it came to music, he was the undisputed head of us all.

We would listen to the music that he liked, and he would introduce us to music we had not heard before or would not give a chance otherwise. I still remember the first time I listened to "*Bohemian Rhapsody*" in Barry's room on his stereo as he described to me what was going on in the music and how they made the harmonies sound like a hundred people.

He knew music very well—all the ins and outs—and I just marveled at his dedication to it.

Lynyrd Skynyrd was still alive. The plane had not gone down yet, and we looked at them as heroes along with The Marshall Tucker Band. There were a lot of things still alive and well in those days. One of those things was patriotism.

That word seems a bit worn out now. Now it means something more political than it did then. Then, everyone I knew considered themselves to be a patriot. It was the bicentennial year of our country. It was a marvelous time to be alive and be twelve going on thirteen.

This story begins in the spring of 1975. There were lots of reasons for us to celebrate that year. Life was simple to us. Live a good life, work hard, play hard, love one another, and nothing bad would touch you. That was the attitude of the day.

We always had a secure feeling in those days that even though bad things would happen, overall, everything was alright.

The lawns always needed to be cut, which meant a steady summer income for some of us boys. If you were looking for work, all you had to do was get your lawnmower and roam the neighborhood looking for clients. In those days it didn't take long to find a yard to cut.

The first person I met in the neighborhood was Warren. Warren would become my best friend through thick and thin. Others might pass through the story, but he was always there.

My mom swore that he got me into trouble, and his mom swore that I got him into trouble. We worked together and played together for hours on end. He was bigger than me but slower. Warren had a way of making me laugh even when things were bad.

He had pale skin and no hair anywhere, as far as I knew, on his body except for his head. He had light and fair hair that was easily maintained. His eyes always had the look of mischief, and he was a hard worker.

He wore clothes that matched his ambitions. He would wear blue jeans, and attached to his wallet was a chain that attached to his jeans. He liked button-down shirts and would wear T-shirts, but that was not

what he preferred. He wore cowboy boots all of the time unless we were playing a sport, and sometimes he would wear his boots with shorts.

He loved to be risky and never turned down a dare. He was more likely to take chances, but not any that would get the attention of his dad. Mr. Duncan could be pretty strict in the early days—the same as all of our dads. I don't remember any cool dads except for maybe Terry, but his kids were too young to hang out with us.

My stepdad, "the Ghost," liked to watch soap operas, baseball, and later NASCAR. These things were not to be disturbed. He, like all the dads, worked hard all of the time to make ends meet for their families.

This was a neighborhood of blue-collar workers. My stepdad had quit school in the 8th grade to go to work and then later to the army and Korea. This was a common thread in our world. Warren's dad had been in the Air Force during the same time and then he became a truck driver.

Warren wanted to be a truck driver just like his dad. Warren also worked a lot. Everybody did, but the Duncan boys would work all of the time. At first Warren was forced to work a lot, but over time he learned to love working.

On the other hand, I worked a lot, but I wanted to have more fun. So maybe it was me that got us into so much trouble.

My brother Barry befriended Ray Duncan, Warren's older brother. Those two got into music and girls a little before Warren and me. But we were not that far apart in age.

Ray and Warren would dress pretty much alike with a few subtle differences. Ray also liked button-down shirts and cowboy boots, but

he always looked more put together. I believe he was more into impressing the girls than Warren was at that age.

Ray also combed his hair to the side. In this era of disco/rock and roll part down the middle hair, his style was a bit of a throwback. He liked cowboy hats and looked natural in them because he wanted to be a cowboy when he got older. Warren preferred ballcaps, but he would wear a cowboy hat as well. I looked like an idiot in a cowboy hat.

Ray rarely played sports with us except for basketball. Dwayne was the youngest of the Duncans. He would be around a good bit but was the odd man out due to his age. Eventually he was given the nickname Wee Wee. It had nothing to do with his stature because Dwayne wound up being a big strong Marine.

Randall peed on him one night by accident. Our friend Tim started running around yelling, “wee wee,” and that stuck.

Each person in our group was unique, and that dynamic made us a formidable team. Being friends was the one thing they were all good at. These guys were great friends. I couldn’t have asked for better ones.

We felt as though we could do anything we set our minds and bodies to. We had no real reason to think that due to our personal situations, so it was more of a feeling of solidarity. Together we could conquer the world.

I do remember the day that Harold moved into the neighborhood. He was an odd little fellow. He had a small face, a big toothy smile, and even bigger hair. When it came to getting in trouble, Harold had a PhD. I didn’t know anyone then or since that could find trouble like him.

He loved to fight but he never won. He would try to fight Warren from time to time and always lost. Hard-headed would be the best

description of his character. For some reason I liked Harold when others did not. I think he made me look at life through a different lens.

Now he always wore blue jeans and some sort of T-shirt. I only saw him wearing anything else in the wintertime when he wore a blue-jean jacket with Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer embroidered on the back of it as big as the jacket itself.

Harold would work just like the rest of us, but he looked for the angles—how to make money without doing much. I still remember working with him at Page's Lake getting dead fish out of the water. I would wonder why dead fish float and dead people sink.

It was a fairly easy job that he talked me into doing. Pay was not that great, but we would also get Mrs. Page to give us an RC Cola and a Moon Pie. That was just pure heaven as we sat there on the steps and watched the fishermen weigh their carp. Carp were awful to eat, but they got rather large. Each day Mrs. Page would give a prize for the biggest carp. Most were put right back in the water.

Harold was always on the scam. He was also always smoking cigarettes and/or marijuana. He was my only friend that smoked marijuana. I had a strong disfavor for the drug. It smelled and looked like defeat. It made people defeated. I didn't like that at all.

Harold would even smoke at school on Herb Curb. The funny thing about Harold and school was that although Harold was at school, he wasn't really in school.

He would come to school with us but then rarely be seen other than smoking on Herb Curb or at lunch. One day a teacher asked Harold if he could see the blackboard, and he replied, "If you could move your fat butt out of the way I could." That earned him a trip to see Wahoo McDaniel, our American Indian principal.

All of this made Harold weird to the rest of us. So, we called him Ole Weird Harold.

Keith was the smartest kid in the neighborhood. He was a year older than us and about five years smarter—shoot, maybe more. He read college books all the time and could quote ancient philosophers and stuff. He was way funny and had a sister that all of us boys didn't mind being around.

He was the best basketball player in the neighborhood and he was a vegetarian. I have no real idea how that came about, but it wasn't political like people want to make it today. He just didn't like meat. I think it was the consistency of it.

Keith had to be creative about his meals, so he learned to cook. He loved cooking for us on Sundays, and we would watch football at his house and eat stuff like rice and beans.

His folks would be gone on Sunday. Where? I have no idea. He also had a cellar under his house. It was the only cellar that existed in the neighborhood.

One day he asked, "Hey Steve, can you go down to the cellar and get a can of beans off that shelf on the left?" I went over to the door and looked down for a long moment, and it occurred to me that there never was an adequate motivation to go down into a cellar alone.

I got Harold to go with me. We marched down the stairs in unison like soldiers on parade with our shoulders touching, and we came back the same way. When we got back, Harold told me, "It's really not that hard to get scared in your own house, much less a creepy cellar in someone else's."

Ole Weird Harold was always full of wit or shit depending on the occasion.

Jolly Roger was new to the neighborhood and, as it turned out, wouldn't stay for very long. Roger was overweight—hence the nickname. It wasn't his fault though. It was genetic.

In other places and at other times he was picked on for it. I knew all about being picked on for something you couldn't control. Roger was welcomed by us with open arms. He was also a very happy guy. With all that he could have been unhappy about, he was not.

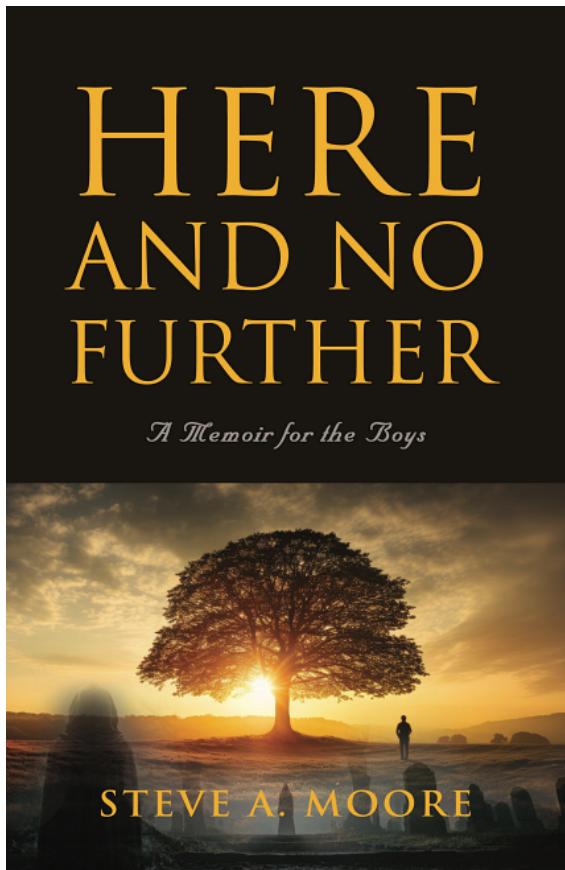
He loved to throw the frisbee. I remember fondly throwing the frisbee with Roger in his front yard and listening to the radio—WORD AM Radio. All that running about would come in handy for Roger later on.

That was us, the Black Sheep. Barry, Ray, Warren, Dwayne, Harold, Keith, Roger, and myself along with others that would drop in here and there. There is so much more to say about these guys, and all of that will come later.

Our little piece of the earth was full of characters that we would like or dislike depending on what they did to us or for us. It was a perilous place where we under-appreciated the danger.

There were wild dogs, wild boars, snakes, spiders, domesticated animals that could be pretty mean, and then there was the potential for accidents and running afoul of bad people.

How we got to that fateful night and the expanding knowledge of what was actually there started not long after we moved to Hemlock Drive.



Beginning in the summer of 1975, Steve and his friends, known as the Black Sheep discover a graveyard in the ruins of Blanchard Town and it's ghostly guards. What happens next is a dangerous and humorous story of discovery and friendship.

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