

# Psychiatric Survivor

From  
**MISDIAGNOSED**  
Mental Patient to  
Hospital Director

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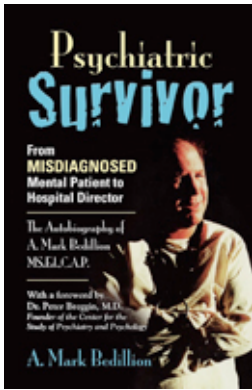
The Autobiography of  
A. Mark Bedillion  
MS.Ed.,C.A.P.

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With a foreword by  
Dr. Peter Breggin, M.D.  
*Founder of the Center for the  
Study of Psychiatry and Psychology*

**A. Mark Bedillion**





*Is the psychiatric industry over diagnosing us and our kids? • Why do so many people suddenly need psychiatric drugs to function? • Are the drugs they're prescribing doing more harm than good? Follow Mark's story from being wrongly committed as a mental patient, to becoming director of a psychiatric hospital nearby! The people who confined him unknowingly began sending HIM patients! People all over the world have read Psychiatric Survivor. Can you be set free, too?*

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First Edition

## Chapter Three

### The Prodigal Son

*It was* 1971. Being twenty-one and working as a waiter gave me a feeling of independence. Soon after starting on the job, Jenny, one of the waitresses, asked me to go out with her. She turned out to be a heroin addict and our relationship ended quickly—needles made me very uneasy. There was another waitress there named Jean. We began dating. My emotions were a mess as my long-term relationship with my former girlfriend Susan had ended. Jean could tell that the break-up with my former girlfriend had hurt me deeply and that I was an emotional wreck. Relationships with women usually caused me a lot of heart ache. Maybe looking for love with women that my mother never gave me could have precipitated this desire to search for love with any woman. Trying to fill this void with women was disastrous. This was a sure sign of an extremely dependent personality. Why could I not see how dependent I truly was?

One night at a drive-in movie theater Jean gave me a prescription drug to ease the pain. It was a Quaalude. My thoughts applauded the drug. *Wow, this is already one of my favorites!* It deadened the painful feelings of sadness and loss. It turned out that our drugs of choice were the same for many years. Unfortunately, because of such choices, my life would get progressively worse.

Eventually, we used cocaine and other narcotics; however, we preferred prescription drugs. We were two walking garbage cans—not caring what we put into our bodies. Jean played the doctor game. She was great at it. The game was about getting high. The objective of the game was to find the latest drug and come up with a way to get a doctor to prescribe it for you. This was done by feigning the

A. Mark Bedillion MS. Ed., C.A.P.

ailment it was intended to treat. If one doctor refused to write the prescription, you tried until you found one who would. Unfortunately, winning this game could cost you your life. We could always get the drugs we wanted and, to ensure a constant flow of drugs, we would go to each other's doctors. Friends who bought some of our surplus helped supplement our income and solidify our status as part of the in-crowd. The doctors never asked us how we came to know so much about prescription drugs. As long as we paid them, they did not seem to mind giving us what we wanted. We knew exactly how to manipulate them and never had to go out on the street for drugs. You cannot imagine how many "Doctor Feelgoods" we found in the phone book.

This started a real life of insanity where wrecked cars, fights, blackouts, evictions, and nights in jail became our new life style. The more serious arrests like drunk driving were not to come until later. Eventually Jean and I moved in together and lived this life of insanity for nearly five years.

Deciding to get a license to cut hair was a perfunctory attempt at trying to normalize my life. After completing beautician school, Jean suggested that we move to Orlando, Florida, so off we went. We both found jobs fairly quickly—she in the retail clothing business and me cutting hair. We used most of our money to support our life of partying. To say that we had a very dysfunctional relationship would definitely have been an understatement. The only time we could show affection for each other was when we were under the influence of Quaaludes and wine. Eventually my appearance began to change—growing a beard, having my ear pierced and wearing my hair in a big Afro became my new look. It never became clear what caused me to do this. *Maybe it was just another role for me in the theater of life.* Whenever I got high on drugs or alcohol, meeting women became a major priority. This sexual addiction caused my relationship with Jean to become very strained.

The depths of loneliness can be very severe without the human touch. It did not even matter to me if that touch came from another man. When that type of pain surfaced

### *Psychiatric Survivor*

within me even a homosexual experience was not taboo. *After all, I rationalized, since my first sexual experience was with a man, it's familiar territory. Because of the extreme loneliness—alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling—any addiction satisfied me for the moment. The painful emotions seemed like they were never going to end.* Death began to seem like a pleasant experience compared to the pain of my loneliness. More and more sadness kept developing inside of me. I continued to look for reasons, analyzing my past.

*Maybe, I thought, if Mom had given me the nurturing I needed, I wouldn't be looking for love from women to fill that void. And if Dad had provided that nurturing then, perhaps, I wouldn't be looking for love from men.* Having sex with both men and women was a poor attempt at filling the large hole that I had inside of me. What a tragic state to be in! If God had let me die at that moment, it would have been fine with me.

Craving companionship seemed to be a symptom of my drunkenness. Visiting the porn shops, prostitutes, and women in the bars and strip clubs became habitual. My ego went sky high one night when a woman in a bar sat down next to me and began to talk. She was one of the most beautiful women I had ever met. We drank and talked for a couple of hours before deciding to leave and get a room somewhere. Once in my car, we sat and kissed. After touching her all over, to my incredible surprise—you guessed it—*she* turned out to be a *he*! My stomach churned!

"How," I angrily demanded, "could you lie and trick me like that?"

"Are...are you going to beat me up?" He/she whimpered pathetically, sliding away from me.

"No! I should, but I want you to get out of my car—now!"

Men pretending to be women seemed like a common theme on the streets. Recognizing that some people were even more confused than I was gave me no comfort. I knew that their bizarre behavior was the result of being starved for affection.

*A. Mark Bedillion MS. Ed., C.A.P.*

We were not doing well in Florida and Jean was really homesick for her family so we returned to Pittsburgh and moved in temporarily with her parents until we could find a place of our own. Many parties were planned for our homecoming—our friends had not seen us in a long time and we had a lot of catching up to do. The first party was in the North Hills of Pittsburgh. The booze and drugs flowed freely. Our contribution to the party was a fresh supply of Quaaludes and Amphetamines. No matter where we went, we never lost touch with our doctors. When we went to the doctors, we would tell them that we were going on an extended vacation. They did not care! As long as we had our checkbooks ready, they were ready to write us a prescription for the dope.

One night we went to a party and drank and drugged from 7:00 PM until well after midnight. It was in the wee hours of the morning when we left for home. Having consumed so much alcohol and taken so many Quaaludes, and who knows what else, it was amazing that I had not overdosed. Even more unbelievable was the fact that I tried to drive the forty miles home in that condition. When we were about ten miles from Jean's house on the Greensburg Pike, I began fighting to stay awake. This was one of the steepest roads in the eastern part of Pittsburgh, often referred to as the hill from hell. It was raining very hard. Before starting down the hill, I stopped and asked Jean to drive. Receiving no answer, I looked over at her and saw why; she was fast asleep.

Three-fourths of the way down, at the hill's steepest point, I fell asleep. The flashing headlights and blaring horn from the car behind me woke me up but it was too late! There, directly in front of me, loomed a parked car. Even jamming on the brakes could not prevent the crash. By the grace of God, the horn that woke me up probably saved our lives for it gave me time to apply the brakes and slow us down. Without that, we would have both been killed. Even so, we still hit the parked car at a fairly high rate of speed. Some estimate that we were doing at least 40 miles an hour.



### *Psychiatric Survivor*

Bracing myself just before the impact helped a little. I'll never forget that crash! The force knocked the parked car up onto the grass in front of the owner's house. My chest hit the steering wheel. Jean hit her knee on the dashboard and her face smashed against the windshield. Both of us were thrown from the car.

Dazed, and with my face in the cold water-filled gutter, I could feel the heavy rain hitting my body. A car door slammed. The man who had been driving behind me quickly came to my assistance. Lifting my head out of the gutter, he placed it on his lap. As if from a distance, I heard him shout, "Call an ambulance!"

"Where's Jean?" I managed to mumble. Not hearing me, he leaned closer. "Where's Jean?" I repeated.

"My wife's with her! Just relax!"

"How...how is she? Tell me!"

"Honey," I heard him shout, "how is she?"

"Badly bruised, but she'll be okay."

My chest felt like it was crushed and it was difficult for me to breathe. "Please," I pleaded, "get some help! Don't let me die!"

"I'll do all I can," he said, dragging me over to the grass.

As long as things were going my way, I had no need for God; however, every time trouble befell me—I mean real trouble—I called on Him. This was no exception. *Please God, I silently pleaded, don't let my life end like this, here in the gutter!*

An ambulance finally arrived and rushed us to the hospital. Miraculously, other than the bruises, Jean only had some superficial cuts and abrasions. My ribs were bruised but not broken. We were both very sore for the next couple of weeks. Suddenly, not only were we hurting, we had no car. It was a miracle that we had survived! The embankment that we could have gone over was almost a 100 feet straight down.

Unbelievably, we only had to pay \$150 for the parked car we had hit. Because the woman who owned the car had recently been in an accident and the car had been totaled by

A. Mark Bedillion MS. Ed., C.A.P.

her insurance company, we only had to pay for salvage. God again showed me His grace! We could have been paying for many years had that been a new car.

God never let me be destroyed. My existence felt similar to Job's. God, as written in Job 1:6-12, told Satan, "You can do anything to Job except take his life." But Job was a righteous man—while righteousness never applied to my lifestyle. Why God never ended my life is beyond me. In fact, I asked myself, *God, why would You even spare one of the dregs of the earth like me?* It shows how God's love is much higher than any concept of love we could possibly have.

You would have thought the car crash would have taught us a lesson. Test crash dummies probably had more sense than Jean and I did. We never seemed to learn from our mistakes. *How do you spell denial?*

One Friday night we were popping pills and drinking heavily at a bar near Jean's parents' home when we met up with Mack, an old friend of mine who had just recently returned from Vietnam. Mack and I had been like brothers when we were younger. He served as a tank commander in Vietnam and had received the Purple Heart for his wounds. Since his discharge from the service, he had been working as a chef. Throughout our lives, we ran into each other from time to time. At any rate, Jean and I were doing drugs and drinking, but not Mac—drugs and drinking was not his vice! His vice was pornography; he had a huge collection of pornographic magazines! I thought he was very lucky; not because he had a porno collection, but because he did not appear to have nearly as many addictions as I did. It seemed that God had allowed me to have every vice, sin, or addiction there was.

Sam Bale, a professional fighter, was also drinking at the bar. Having earned a reputation for disfiguring people, he was someone you did not mess with. His mom even had to put her house up for bail to keep him out of jail when the police arrested him on criminal charges for hurting people. Sam had recently gotten married and his new bride was with

### *Psychiatric Survivor*

him. Usually my drinking caused me to black out; this night was no different. For me, a black out was a time of momentary unconsciousness, except I appeared to be awake. When people would tell me about what I had done during a black out, it was hard for me to believe. Drinking caused my behavior to become very erratic. That evening, unknown to me, my words must have offended Sam and his wife, because he became extremely angry.

After drinking for hours Jean, Mack and I left the bar. We staggered our way outside. To my surprise, someone punched Mack and knocked him to the ground. Next, the same thing happened to Jean. It was Sam! Before I could fully turn my head around to see where he was, he punched me in the face. He didn't knock me down, but my eye was cut. I raised my hands to defend myself; however, he still managed to hit me in the other eye. Warm blood started to run down my face from that eye, too! *I've got to stay on my feet, I thought. If he knocks me down, he'll probably kill me!* He tried, but for some reason, he was not able to knock me down.

Ripping my shirt off and wiping the blood out of my eyes kept my vision from being totally impaired. The only strategy that came to me was to try and keep the car between us. Retreating seemed to make the most sense because, even though I weighed almost 160 pounds and was no stranger to fighting, he was a very big guy—about 250-275 pounds. Being a professional fighter, he knew how to hit someone to hurt them badly.

Three police cars and an ambulance, sirens screaming, arrived on the scene. Sam started to fight with the police and knocked two of them down before they were able to subdue him. He was taken to jail, while the rest of us were rushed to the hospital. Jean's face was a very ugly purple color and her eye was swollen shut. The cuts around my eyes were so severe that they had to be sutured. Mack had only minor injuries.

Jean and I filed a civil lawsuit against Sam for our injuries. Mack, however, decided not to be a part of the suit.

A. Mark Bedillion MS. Ed., C.A.P.

*No matter what I may have said, I thought, he had no right to hit Jean! We won our lawsuit and the court ordered Sam to pay us \$5,000. He agreed to pay us in monthly installments.*

My pride and ego were damaged by this incident and getting revenge on Sam seemed to be the likely remedy. When my thoughts were possessed by the mind-altering alcohol and drugs, I'd convince myself that only by killing him could I restore my reputation. This prompted my decision to purchase a 32 caliber automatic pistol. Placing it under the floor-mat of my old beat up car, a sick but pleasant thought crossed my mind, *the next time I see him, I'm going to shoot him.* It was the dead of winter. Cruising past the bar where we were hurt became my obsession. Four weeks went by before I spotted him leaving the bar with his wife and another guy.

Sitting across the street in my car I was pleased to see that he was nearest to the street. Smiling in anticipation, I thought, *what an easy target! My revenge is at hand! How sweet it is!* Slowing squeezing the trigger, and, in my mind seeing him fall to the ground, caused by heart to race. To my surprise, the gun did not fire! My newly acquired Saturday night special failed me! I pulled the trigger several more times but the gun simply would not fire! By this time he was out of range. No one had seen me, so driving away unnoticed was not a problem.

At home, while checking the gun, it became apparent why it had failed. Somehow the bullets had gotten wet! Not one bullet was dry! The next morning, after sobering up, horror consumed me when I realized how close I had come to killing Sam. *Thank God, I thought, that I'd failed! But for the grace of God, alcohol could have made me a cold-blooded killer!*

Slush under my floor mats was the culprit that had thwarted my assassination attempt. Water had collected there rendering the bullets inoperable. This was yet another example of God's divine intervention. His mercy seemed unfathomable. Had that water and slush not been there,

### *Psychiatric Survivor*

Sam would have been dead and the rest of my life would have been spent on death row.

Oddly enough, about one month after my attempt to kill Sam, he died when his car rolled over. It happened just down the street from where he evaded my gun shots. His wife was not with him. Sam died alone. Years later it occurred to me that Sam was addicted to alcohol and drugs just like me. Instead of trying to kill him, my desire should have been to try and help him get sober. *Why, I wondered, did God let Sam die and not me? God sure worked in mysterious ways!*

Christmas Eve we were invited to my parents' house. Jean had bought me an elegant full-length blue leather coat. By the time we arrived it was around 8:00 PM, and we were already stoned from drinking and doing Quaaludes. It was bitter cold and snow was everywhere. While walking up to their front door, we decided to have a cigarette before going in. After lighting up, we looked in the front window to see who was there and what was happening. After finishing our cigarettes, Jean opened the door and we went in. My entrance was always something to behold.

My sister, the first to see us, yelled, "Fire! Fire!"

I looked around but did not see any fire. My first thought was, *"What kind of joke is she playing on me?"*

"Get some water and throw it on Mark," my mother screamed. "He's on fire!"

Shocked, I wondered, *What does she mean? Why does she want them to throw water on me?*

Looking down it became clear what she meant—flames were shooting out of my pocket and climbing up the front of my coat. My state of mind, because of the drugs and alcohol I had taken, was so altered that it was not immediately clear to me if the flames were real or only a hallucination. They were real! Apparently, after lighting our cigarettes, I put the lit match in my coat pocket. Now, the entire front of my coat was on fire. Everyone started throwing water on me. Finally, the fire was extinguished. Jean could not believe the coat she had just given me was ruined! My mother could not

A. Mark Bedillion MS. Ed., C.A.P.

believe I had set myself on fire! My sisters could not believe I was soaking wet! My dad could not believe I was drunk and I could not believe that the whole thing had happened! That was certainly the hottest coat I ever owned! My family still remembers that Christmas. Laughter and fond memories arise whenever we speak about that beautiful leather coat that was mine—for one brief Christmas Eve.

Jean and I eventually found an apartment in the North Hills of Pittsburgh where she began working in a clothing boutique while I cut hair. One day she called and asked, "How would you like to meet for lunch?" "Sure! What time?" "How about one o'clock at our favorite restaurant?"

Knowing the place she meant and the good food that was served there, I readily agreed, "One o'clock it is. See you there."

At the restaurant she ordered coffee, "Let's wait until later to order, okay?"

"Sure," I responded and indicated to the waitress that I would have a coffee, too. *Why*, I wondered, *does she want to wait to order? She only has a short lunch break!* We talked for a few minutes about small things while sipping our coffee then, looking directly at me, she said, "Mark, I have something to tell you!" In the slight pause that followed I tried to think what it might be. The only thing that came to mind was that she'd found someone else. I was shocked when her words, "I...I'm pregnant," finally registered in my brain.

Selfishly, my immediate thought was, *I can barely take care of myself, much less take care of a child!* Aloud, I said, "Jean, a baby would disrupt my...our plans. Maybe...maybe you should have an abortion! You know we've been talking about moving back to Florida."

Avoiding the abortion issue, she replied, "I know, but I'm not very happy with the idea of leaving my family and friends again. "Mark", she continued, "my parents are well off. They'll build us a house with a swimming pool on the land they've been saving for me. Why don't we stay here?"

### *Psychiatric Survivor*

The thoughts of a marriage, a child, and living in Monroeville, Pennsylvania the rest of my life scared me. The idea that we could have a good life together never even entered my mind. *Sex, I thought, was about having fun, not about having a child. This was not a good time to have a baby! An abortion was the only solution!* "Jean, you've got to get an abortion! It's the only way!"

Tears welled up in her eyes. *How, I thought, can she look so afraid and sad at the same time?*

I rationalized to myself. *She may believe that marriage would be better for us; however, it seems to me that an abortion is the only way out.* Without my support, she reluctantly agreed to abort the baby.

Jean made an appointment with an abortion clinic in the east-end of Pittsburgh. When we got there it was very sterile and gave us an eerie feeling. It was like hell there, and death seemed all around. Many emotions flooded my being. Going through with the abortion affected me more deeply than anticipated. A woman in a white coat came out and Jean followed her into a back room. We were both anxious and scared. After a while I heard moaning sounds coming from the back room. Concerned, I inwardly flinched, *she must have been in terrible pain.*

Waiting for her to return felt like an eternity. The time passed so slowly. Wondering if we were doing the right thing made me cry. Finally, she returned, still groggy from the sedation, and slumped over slightly from the pain. She told me how traumatic the abortion had been and how she bled for some time after the surgery. One thought repeatedly entered my mind, *Well, Mark, now you can add "murderer" to the list—you killed your own baby!*

As time passed, Florida seemed the more likely place for me. Being in the fresh air, sunshine and near the ocean might help me forget the ordeal. Maybe we needed time apart. Jean told me that if all went well she would join me later. Before moving again, she wanted reassurances from me that everything was going to be stable.

*A. Mark Bedillion MS. Ed., C.A.P.*

Once again, escaping to Florida was a welcome relief. A fellow we knew let me move into his mobile home and share the expenses. It was easy finding a job near Disney World cutting hair. One day, while at a local restaurant, a waitress named Pam introduced herself to me. We joked around a lot and hit it off immediately. After exchanging phone numbers we went out, then dated on a regular basis. She was a born-again Christian so we often read the Bible together. During the worst times of my life, even though it was not easy to fully understand their meaning, the Scriptures comforted me. It was like there was some unknown force drawing me to the Bible. Now, it is my belief that this was God's way of leading me to Him.

Before becoming a Christian, Pam had worked as a model and a dancer in strip clubs. There was something very special about her that prompted me to think about leaving Jean. The truth was that my relationship with Jean was over anyway. One night Pam invited me to a revival meeting in the backwoods of Orlando. It was a three-day Christian festival. That weekend, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior.

Jean telephoned and said she wanted to fly to Florida to see me. It was my intention to tell her that it was best if we broke up. Pam said she would not come to the trailer while Jean was there. I did not want Jean to know about Pam and honestly thought it would be better that way.

After Jean arrived at the airport, we went back to the trailer and then out to eat. Something was not right between us—the feelings that we once had for one another were gone. The next day, Pam showed up at the trailer. Wow, did she catch me off guard! There was no option but to tell Jean the truth about Pam. What a terrible feeling that was! After we mutually agreed to separate, Jean returned to Pittsburgh.

Even though we were both Christians, Pam often boozed with me. After about a month with her, Pittsburgh started feeling attractive again. As usual, the things that appealed to me, also left me empty. Neither Pittsburgh nor Orlando seemed to hold the key to my searching. It was deceptive



### *Psychiatric Survivor*

believing that women could fill that void in me. Nothing could ever fill that void, nothing that is, except God!

Moving back to Pittsburgh created a sincere desire in me to reconcile with Jean. We agreed to meet. After apologizing for my mistakes in Florida, we were living together within days; however, our relationship was never the same. Reading the Bible had become a daily activity for me but Jean wanted nothing to do with that. For the first time, it was truly apparent we were worlds apart. Even though we sometimes still partied together, we began discussing going our separate ways.

Several weeks later while we were socializing at a nightclub, a friend introduced me to a nurse named Marcy. She enjoyed sharing about Jesus and the Bible. Unknowingly, that would be the last night Jean and I would ever spend together. My adventures with Marcy were about to begin.

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**Ever Wonder What Bible Means?**

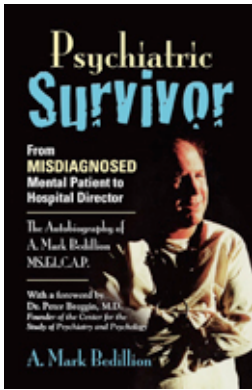
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