***Tucker & Me /* Andrew J. Harvey / FAQ Sheet**

**Who are you?**

I grew up in two worlds, one in Los Angeles and one in Tucker, Georgia, the result of my mother and father’s divorce and shared custody agreement. I had a chaotic but yet entertaining childhood which resulted in this memoir. Professionally, I spent a 25-year career in law enforcement, retiring as a captain. I have developed a strong second career as a college professor, and have authored two other books in the field of leadership. I am married and still live in the Los Angeles region.

**What prepared you to write this book?**

I have thought of writing this book for 40-years, but for a memoir to have value you have to be able to create some meaning out of it, and that can take a lot of time. I experienced the stories in the book as a child, the memories were seasoned over multiple decades, and then the experiences were viewed again as a mature man looking back and trying to understand it all. Until relatively recently, I simply was not ready to write the book. It took a lot of years, much reflection, and the process ended up teaching me a lot about myself.

**What is your book about?**

This is the story of a little boy who had to transition every year from living in one world that was a certain way, to another world that was a different way. Each year I was put on a plane in Los Angeles, where I was sent back to spend some of the summer with my father and his wife in Tucker, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. Life in both locations was a bit crazy, but the juxtaposition of the two was not a life I would recommend to others. It did I think make for some good stories though that ran the gamut from funny to sad to harrowing to terrifying. If you think of the movie *A Christmas Story* or the TV show *The Wonder Years,* you’ll get an idea of my approach.

**Why did you write it?**

I have told the stories in the book for almost forty years. People have consistently seemed to enjoy the stories about my crazy characters, and the most common comment was often, “Hey, you should write those down.” Well, I finally did, and in the process I was able in some small way to immortalize those people and the stories so they have a life beyond my own lifetime. Further, this was a legacy for my adult daughter. One day after I’m gone I hope she will sit down with her children and grandchildren and use the book to help them get to know about family members they may have not been able to meet in their lifetimes.

**What are you hoping the book will do for you? For readers? For Tucker?**

I wrote this as a “bucket list” item, so now that it’s done I can cross that off. Beyond that the satisfaction I have when I pick up the book is immeasurable. To me, it means I have a worthy story to tell, that my life was an interesting one, and the proof that when I’m gone that I really was here. I hope readers will experience the roller coaster of life’s emotions I experienced, but most importantly I hope that as they enjoy the trip though my childhood that they will also have the experience of reliving their own childhood, and perhaps understanding themselves a bit better. For Tucker, the city was traditionally an unincorporated county area. Amazingly though, last year they incorporated as their own city, and I hope this book will help Tucker get the recognition it deserves as a great small town.

**Since you grew up in Tucker and LA, why did you choose to set your book and base your biography on Tucker?**

I have some good stories from my time in LA, but I think the better stories are the ones from Tucker. To me, that was what made my story unique, and particularly so when you overlay Tucker with Los Angeles. Other than that, it just felt right to me to set the book primarily in Tucker.

**How did you go about choosing experiences from childhood to include in the book?**

Some stories were slam dunks for inclusion in the book. I wrote some experimental chapters at first to see if the stories would translate well to writing. Some went by the wayside because they just didn’t transition well to writing-you just kind of had to be there. I ultimately chose to write an Introduction and an Epilogue to bookend the book. Then I began writing short stories. In the first part of the book I alternate between stories about events that happened, and stories about particular characters. I ultimately ran out of characters and continued on with events. I also went through all my old pictures, which helped to clarify the stories, and in some cases remind me of things I had forgotten.

**Of the experiences you share, which is the most memorable and why?**

Things can be memorable because they were great or terrible, so it cuts both ways. There were events in the book where I could have been killed. Being held at gunpoint by my father for closing the car trunk too hard comes to mind. On the positive side, my friendship with Dale, who lived across the street from my father, was a lifesaver.

**Which is the saddest, most joyful, and most surprising?**

My dog Rocky, who earned her own chapter in the book comes to mind. Being in the room with her when they put her down after our 15-years together still can shake me as one of the saddest things I had to do although that came about when I was an adult. Most joyful was my time with my grandmother. We watched wrestling, the roller derby, and had just the best time doing the simplest things together. I think most surprising was that when I went back to Tucker to be with my father for one month out of the year; we didn’t really spend any father-son time together. Although I have developed some theories about this, it still remains a mystery to me. Why have me come back there if we weren’t going to be making up for lost time?

**How did you go about choosing the cover photograph? The photographs in the book?**

The cover photo is one that has sat on my desk for decades. I always knew that if I ever wrote a book about my experiences that that picture should be on the cover. It’s a great representation of that time in my life. As for the other photographs, I tried to pick pictures that would be representative of the stories in that chapter. In some cases I was fortunate enough to have a picture taken at the exact time the story was unfolding. Most of the photos were of my family members, and me as a kid, but there are a few from my life as an adult that symbolize the chapter. As example being where I tell the story of experiencing the moon landing as a boy, and then getting to meet Buzz Aldrin decades later.

**What reaction do you think your friends in Tucker will have to the book?**

I think they will be astounded that I wrote a book about our times together, 50 years after the fact. They will no doubt think, how did he remember all that stuff? They have nothing to fear though, they are all portrayed in a very positive light.

**What are your plans for promoting the book?**

As an experienced writer, I know that the real work begins after the book is published. Social media has become huge, and I will pursue that as a cost effective way of getting the word out. I have sent complimentary copies of the book to the mayor and council members of Tucker, in the hopes they will see the release of the book as a once in a lifetime opportunity to promote their city. I have a publicist who will be setting up various interviews in print media, radio, and TV. Perhaps most interestingly though, I will be returning to the south to promote the book, particularly within the Tucker/Atlanta area. I will be stopping by all the old haunts in which the book is set, and taking pictures and filming videos, which will be displayed in a *Tucker & Me* Facebook page.

**What authors have influenced your writing? Who are your favorite memoirists? What have you learned from them?**

I have always enjoyed reading in this genre, so I have a strong background in how others approached the telling of their lives. Specifically leading up to writing this book, I also read some “how to” books on writing one’s memoirs. One thing that stands out most for me is that you must write authentically-readers can see through a phony, and a memoir that is not credible to the readers is not worth much. My favorite book, and it just happens to be a memoir, is *All Creatures Great and Small* by James Herriott. This is a collection of short stories by the author who was a country veterinarian in England in the 1940’s. His writing could be described as the beauty of simplicity, and I tried to model my writing in this manner.

**Do you have any future writing projects planned?**

As you might imagine, this particular book was all consuming due to its deeply personal nature, so I have nothing immediately in the hopper. I have written extensively in the field of leadership, so it might be natural for me to return to that as I have continued to learn and study in that field. I may also decide to mine some other areas of my life for material, and it’s not inconceivable that I might try my hand at a novel. The memoir genre is one I loved, because it provides a beautiful ingrained structure. However, it also limits what one can write. The wide-open playing field that is a novel might be appealing after being so constrained by real-life events.