

**"GUS JR. WANTS TO TALK TO YOU"**  
**As told by Gus Dick Jr.**

I am Gus Jr. a.k.a Dick Andros, and as long as I live I will be the baby Gus Jr. in the eyes of my family. At 65 and on Medicare I had to have an operation for a chronic hernia. My older cousin George Pete had had the same operation the year before. I didn't know how Medicare worked so I called him to see if he could give me some information on Medicare, also what he could tell me about the chronic hernia. His wife, Evelyn, answered the phone and after we chatted for a minute or two, she called out, "Pete, Gus Jr. wants to talk to you." I realized at that moment I was still the baby Gus Jr.

I happen to be the youngest child on both sides of my family. I have one cousin living in Missouri about 2 months older than I, and I have never heard of him being referred to as "baby." I guess this is what this story is about. I have grown up, proud of myself, and wish my family would acknowledge it.

On March 4, 1926, at 1:00 AM I was born an unplanned, unwanted child. I was told by my mother from as early as I can remember that I happened by accident and everyone thought my birth would kill her. You see my brother Dee weighed 14 pounds at birth and it was such a difficult birth, that my mother was told that she could never have another child. Yet just 17 months later there I was. I guess she thought, for nine months, I was a time bomb that would kill her while giving birth. She didn't die nor did she ever let me forget it.

They thought that I would be a girl and already had me named, Jannula Jane, after both of my grandmothers. I think that if I had been a girl mother might have accepted me.

The Greek Church names the male child so I remained unnamed for some time. Mother wanted my brother Plato to be named after her husband, but the Church had other ideas. When Dee was born, again mother wanted him to be named after his father. Dee was christened Demosthenes. The Church wanted to name me Christos, but my mother was not going to have a Christ running around to house. She fought and won the battle and I was christened Constantine after my father. Constantine translates into Gus, Plato's name stayed and Demosthenes' nickname became Dee, and that was fine with him.

My father, Gus, and others from his village in Greece came to America when he was 18 and they worked on the railroad until they got to Oklahoma City. He and two brothers--Pete and Panos came to America together. They later sent for their younger brother Nick and nephew Dimitrius (later to be called Jimmy the Greek). Pete married and had two children, George Pete and Athena. He deserted his wife and children and my father took over their care. Panos, who I remember, finally went back to Greece. But before all of this the brothers opened a candy kitchen near the Post Office, named "The Post Office Candy Kitchen."

It was at the soda fountain, in this store, that my mother met my father. We all called my father, Daddy. I remember the Candy Kitchen with a huge marble slab in the back where the chocolates were made.

Mother, Harriett Roberts a.k.a. Hattie came to Oklahoma from Adonis, Missouri, in a part, of the Ozark Hills to go to school at the Teacher's College in Edmond, Oklahoma. She did some teaching and later worked as a bookkeeper in Oklahoma City. One day on her way home from work she stopped in the store for an ice cream soda. Daddy saw her and offered her a lift in his car. That was the beginning of their courtship. Marriage and Plato followed, Daddy was so proud of Plato that from infancy Daddy took Plato to the store. Mother often said that Daddy was really Plato's mother. Four years passed before Dee appeared.

Daddy and his brothers invested their monies into real estate. They bought both business and residential property. Daddy and Uncle Nick bought a house and an apartment house together. Daddy, on his own, bought houses throughout the city. Mother would point out houses and say that Daddy owned it at one time. Dee and I were born at the apartment house on East 4th and we lived there until I was two.

Then Daddy bought another house on East 12th and we moved in, the worse day of my life. After they packed the truck and ready to leave they didn't have enough space for me to ride in the car with the rest of the family. I do not know whose idea it was to put me in my baby bed in an open truck. The family followed behind the truck, they could see me but I couldn't see them. I remember this very well, I was sure I was being taken away by strangers. When the truck pulled up in front of our new house I was hysterical. For years I never wanted to leave their side for fear I would be turned over to strangers.

The 1929 depression caused Daddy's world to fall apart. He lost almost all of his investments. I know that he never recovered this loss and in his mind he died a poor man. Yet he managed to keep two houses, an apartment, and two business buildings, everything but the house we lived in was owned by him and his brothers.

Mother's father came to live with us and he was "Papa", a man with a great sense of humor. I never saw him angry or upset. I remember him always laughing. He helped Daddy by working at the candy kitchen selling fruit in front of the store. Aunt Oma, a school teacher and her husband Uncle Argus, a lawyer, Aunt Vivan and her husband Uncle Mac moved into the apartment house and ran a grocery store. Aunt Vivan and Uncle Mac had three children Donald, Evelyn and Katherine Jane. Until the WW II we lived close to each other. Although, the Mac Donalds, moved a survival times, while I lived in Oklahoma City.

We had a three bedroom house; Mother, Daddy, Plato, Dee and myself slept in one room and Uncle Nick and Papa slept in another, what the master bedroom was for I don't know. I slept in my baby bed many years after I should have been in a regular bed. I can't remember when, but eventually Daddy and mother moved into the master bedroom, and Plato got a double bed for himself and I was allowed to sleep with Dee. In bed Dee would pull the covers one way and I would pull the other, stretching them tight, and after we fell asleep, Tarzan, my cat. would walk up the center and pull the cover off of both of us. Neither one of us would move him and we would sleep without covers, and it could get very cold in Oklahoma.

We finally got a radio and the evening would be spent sitting around this small box to hear what we could. Later a bigger radio was purchased for the living room and the small one was moved into our room. Plato would stay out late, and when he came home he would turn the radio on and listen to "Inter Sanctum." To this day I can even tell some of the stories. I was very young and I would often cry out, but it fell on deaf ears in the master bedroom.

When I was in the first grade I became ill with Roseola and missed weeks of school. The next year I got scarlet fever and missed 6 weeks of school. The disease left me with a hearing defect. I had trouble talking clearly. Mother would tell me that I would come to her saying, "Papa is the dumbest man alive. He can't understand a word I say." She then told me that no one could understand me, but her. To this day I do not hear all the sounds and must see some words written before I can pronounce them. Mother had me take elocution lessons to improve my speech. I have always been ashamed of the fact that I can't say or pronounce words that everyone else can easily roll off their tongue. This is a reason I can't spell, but because of the lessons given me by a dear teacher Mary Gray Thompson I speak better than most.

There was a constant stream of family and friends coming to visit or to stay awhile. Sometime it was from the Greek side and sometime from the other-side. Let me take a minute to talk of the other side. We have traced the family back to the Rules and Tarwaters. They came to the colonies and later fought in the revolution and also in Civil War. Some of the family moved from Tennessee to Missouri. They were hillbillies, and when I visited Greece many years later I found them to be hillbillies also, and I love that part of my background. It proves that background has little to do with one's future. Daddy and mother left their homes to improve their lives, and I, like them, left home to improve mine.

Growing up in what looked like a perfect family wasn't easy for me. Plato and I fought constantly. Plato, is five years older and played professional football, would beat me up often times leaving me bruised. It was not unusual for him to do this in front of my mother. When Daddy came home I would tell him, but Plato would tell Daddy that he was making me tough. That seemed to have satisfied my parents. Papa would try to stand up for me, and he would tell mother, "Those boys are tormenting Gus Jr. to death." I never remember mother taking my side or really making a effort to stop it.

One time Plato was beating me, and I couldn't take it anymore. I went into the kitchen, got a knife and threw it at Plato. It stuck in his shoulder blade and bounced out! Mother screamed, and Plato turned on me and almost put me in the hospital. I was so battered that when Daddy saw me they told him I had fallen off the porch. I was told not to tell. Daddy never heard the truth. Daddy was not a violent man and never laid a hand on me; Plato did the job. I loved my father and I am sure he loved me. I am not sure if he knew what my life was like when he was not there. I did run away a few times, but I was always returned. Once on my return my father took me in his room closing the door behind him. I was afraid that he would punish me, but he took me in his arms and told me that he loved me. From that time on I faked fear and illness to sleep with him. I would start off the night sleeping with him, but I woke up in my own bed. I loved being in his arms while he told me of his life in Greece or what his day was like. I really became a sounding board for him. I knew he never got over the depression, other things he told me were: how he hated that no one called him Mr.

Andros; or how low his bank account was. He felt that he was a failure yet I saw doctors and lawyers come to him for advise.

Oil was discovered on two of Daddy's properties, and that made a big difference in our lives. We remodeled our house, and got a new car, and two new bicycles, for Plato and Dee. I got the hand-me-down, that looked like the very first bicycle ever made. I am sure it didn't enter their heads that maybe I should have gotten a new bicycle also--I never got a new bicycle until I was over 40--I at least, didn't have to share the old one.

I began to be more and more isolated from the family. Often time I would hide under the bed when we had company, but I did make friends in the neighborhood and spent many hours out of the house. I would often talk with my cat, Tarzan. He couldn't answer, but he would tilt his head as if he were listening. I developed a great fantasy world that helped me get through those difficult years.

Our State Fair was a yearly happening. The schools closed so we could attend. Mother and her sisters would pack all of us in a car and away we went. My aunts and mother prepared picnic baskets, and we were each given a dollar to spend on rides and sugar candies. The big event of the day was the Grandstand show. We sat on bleachers and if you were lucky you got a center seat. The State Fair was always held in the fall and some evenings it got very chilly. I will never forget the year I was nine. I was cold and snuggled up to mother, she turn to me and said, "Won't you ever grow up?" I pulled away from her and I never went back from that time. I really felt I was a roomer in our house. Our relationship was one of compromise. Mother never gave me the love I wanted, but she did make sacrifices for all of us. If we needed clothes and shoes we got them. When she had the money she didn't deny us. I felt that mother's way of showing affection, but I would have been happier with a hug.

Also when I was nine I went out with the guys in the neighborhood on Halloween. We weren't mean kids, but at the same time we were no angels. We would soap windows and throw garbage on people's porches. While we were out the gang I was with saw a light about a block away, and at first we thought it was a jack-o-lantern. "Let's go and knock it down!" a voice said and we were off. When we got there we saw it was a ball on a barber's pole.

"You're not going to break it are you?" I asked.

"Why sure!" they said.

"I don't want to do it." I implored, but they did it anyway. They ran off, but I refused to run because I wasn't guilty and I was caught. They took me home to my mother. I told her the truth and she told them "If he said he didn't do it--he didn't."

I would not tell them who did. My buddies were caught because they were overheard telling everyone how I had chickened out. You see I didn't lie and mother knew I didn't. To this day if I feel I am right I will not give an inch, and this has cost me--but I can look in the mirror and not be ashamed.

Papa died in my presence and I remember everyone crying including Daddy. I was lost in the crowd, Evelyn, my cousin, saw I felt just as sad as everyone else and took me out on the back porch and tried to explain death to me. I am sure she knew less than I. Evelyn and I are closer than any brother or sister.

Plato was moved into Papa's bed and Dee and I shared the bedroom. What a pleasure to get Plato out of our room. It is funny that Plato only needed a place to sleep, it didn't seem to bother him that he had no privacy. He also never stayed around the house. One could question that, but Plato is the only one that can answer why.

I was growing older and nothing in the house ever changed. One day I came home and the house was full of men fussing over Daddy. I was kept at a distance and I knew he was very ill. I could hear him cry in pain. Every day the doctor and the men in the family surrounded his bed. Not knowing what was wrong the doctors took him to the hospital for an exploratory operation. They found that his appendix had burst and it was too late to save his life.

Mother, Plato, Dee and I waited in the waiting room late at night and the doctor came over to mother and said something, I knew he had told her that Daddy had died, Mother sank into the chair and put her hands to her face.

I got very upset the next day because Plato had taken Daddy's seat at the table. He didn't let one meal go by before he tried to take the place of my father--fat chance!!!!