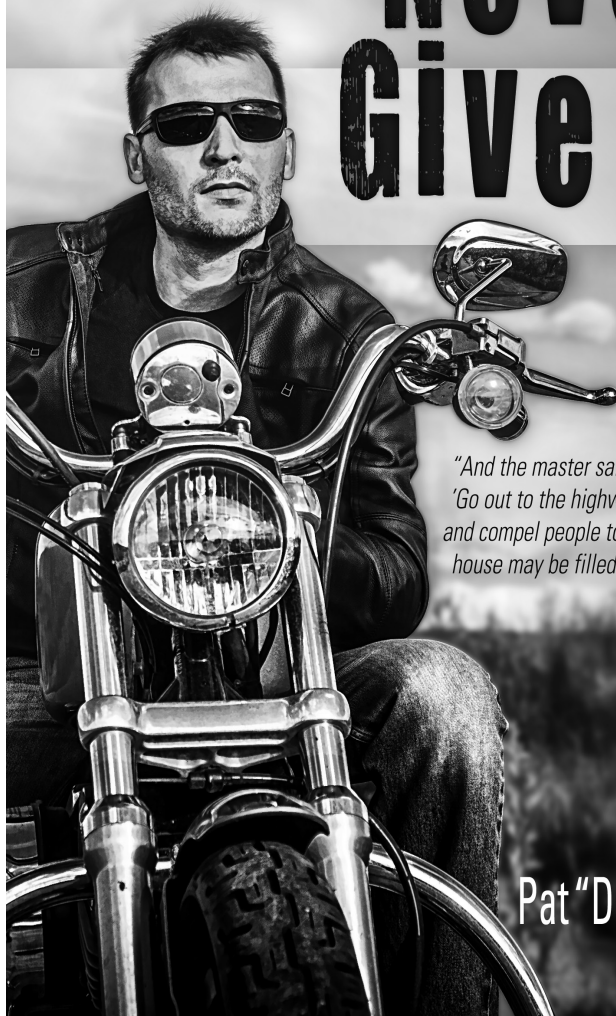


A True Story of Hope, Healing, and Renewal

Never Give Up



*"And the master said to the servant,
'Go out to the highways and hedges,
and compel people to come in, that my
house may be filled.' "*—Luke 14:23, RSV

Pat "Doc" Nave



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1: The Heritage of the Yuck

Every story has a beginning, and mine began less than spectacularly at St. Joseph's Hospital in Pontiac, Michigan, on June 6, 1965. My mother would gleefully cackle that I was supposed to be twin girls and that somehow I thwarted the doctors and came out as one boy. I would respond that I was apparently twice as good as any girl, but she never seemed convinced.

I entered the world as an innocent child, but if I could have vetoed the choice of my parents, I probably would have. I mean, who would want to be born into a drug dealer's family? The silver screen may make it sound cool, but there was not much silver in the screen of my life. My father was born to Nina and Mack Nave from Protem, Missouri. Protem is a little hamlet in southern Missouri near the border of Arkansas.

My grandfather Mack was a gruff and demanding man who had many brushes with the law, and who didn't think twice about cheating on his wife. When he was arrested and on his way to prison, he escaped and spent the rest of his life dodging the law. Soon he was also dodging

cancer. Both finally caught up with him.

I had no idea about my grandfather's life until I picked up a *Leeper*, Michigan, newspaper one day. The front page announced that it was the anniversary of the arrest of the dangerous outlaw Mack Nave. He had died before I was born, and from the stories of his craziness, I figured that he was a rebel. Apparently, he was a rebel and a fugitive.

A favorite story about my grandfather as a young man centered around his father offering him a large sum of money and a ranch in Missouri. Mack, being the carefree type, turned him down and began to live as a drifter, in and out of trouble, always looking for the next great adventure.

It seemed Mack was born in the wrong century. He should have lived during the Civil War, when outlaws were rampant and the urge to head west filled many a young man with suspense. This urge for action, the unknown, and adventure lives in the DNA of the Nave clan. Never satisfied with the status quo, they are always seeking for that next adrenaline hit.

Growing up, my father had only one source of stability, his mom and my granny, Nina Maude Nave, quite possibly the toughest woman you could ever know. Somewhat like the tough-as-nails Granny Clampett on the TV show *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Granny Nina was tougher still, a bit heavier, and a bit more coarse. She carried a .38 pistol in her purse and had been known to brandish it when needed.

The memories of my granny were quite colorful. She was our doctor, sage, and do-it-all person. When I needed a tooth pulled, she would call over my uncle Joe and he would hold me down while she straddled me and took out her doctorin' tools—which in the case of tooth pullin' was a set of vise grips. She would latch on to the tooth and heave with all her might. The poor tooth never stood a chance. I learned early on never to complain about a loose tooth.

But she was more than a "dentist." In fourth grade, I made the mistake of growing a seed wart on the bottom of my foot. Looking for some pity, I complained, and before I knew it, my uncle had me pinned on the hood of her car. Granny had gotten out a knife and started doctorin' me right there on the spot. She dug into the wart, determined to eradicate it forever. There was no pain reliever, and if

I complained, my uncle was quick to question my manhood. I kept telling him that even a man would at least get a bullet to bite down on. He was not impressed and just told me to suck it up.

I grew up thinking that Granny had been a nurse. It wasn't until I was grown and married that I learned she got her doctorin' skills from working as a custodian at a mental hospital. If I had known that at the time, I would have been terrified of her, but in my ignorance, I was always in awe of her surgical magic.

One time, my older brother split open his foot on a bottle in the lake and Granny was called to fix it up. I imagined that he was going to be taken to the hospital, as there was blood everywhere, but not so. Granny got out her turpentine and rubbing alcohol; and before we knew it, she had a rag tied around Jim's foot and the healing had begun.

A few weeks later, she had to try her healing methods on my torn-up kneecap. At five years old, I had decided that I was Superman. Carefully placing a towel around my neck and securing it with a clothes pin, I dashed down the hillside behind our house before launching myself into the air. My certainty that I could fly came crashing down, along with my kneecap on a stump with an old rusty nail sticking out of it.

In agony, I once again made the mistake of howling, and Granny was quick to the rescue. She cleaned out the wound and for the rest of that summer I was placed on a lounge chair for my knee to heal. Strangely, it did actually heal. Of course, today I have this nice little scar to show for it, but in my mind, the legend of Granny grew by leaps and bounds. I knew this feisty little lady could do anything.

Granny proved to be the only stable thing in my dad's life, and almost every picture or story about him growing up involved her in some way. She was the ever-present glue that held everything together.

My dad was the pup of the family, and he remembered with great fondness growing up in the foothills of Missouri. He would hunt all kinds of animals, swim with the snakes in the rivers, and was content to just exist with nature.

However, the world was also a toxic place for my father. As a young boy, the years of living on the run took their toll. Dad lived one step ahead of the law, settling down wherever he could hide out—a shed he turned into a small house, a barn, or some other nondescript place.

One of his insecure homes caught fire and he lost all his earthly possessions. His rotten, haggard, and poor existence gave birth to a desperate desire for wealth, to a dream to rise above the poverty level. Into adulthood, his life became a constant search to improve his status, make a buck, and make it to the “big time.”

Dad was the youngest of five kids, and his father impacted them all. Dan was the oldest child, and he grew up wild as a buck. The Nave blood flowed recklessly through him. He served time in prison and various jails and ended up paralyzed in a car accident. When I met Uncle Dan, he was living in our living room on an old hospital bed. His hands were permanently curved; the only movement he had was his arms and head. He was a fixture in our home, and life came to revolve around him. Granny was his nurse, adding to the faulty concept that she was some amazing medical miracle worker.

The next two children Granny had were girls, and then there was Uncle Joe. Uncle Joe stepped in when Dad was arrested. He was about the same height and build, and the same temperament boiled within him. One of the first stories I heard about Uncle Joe was of him walking down the street with Aunt Mona, his wife. A guy poked his head out of a pickup truck, made a lewd remark about Aunt Mona, and kept on driving. Seeing the guy stop at a red light, Uncle Joe ran after him, and the guy scrambled to roll up his window. Not to be outdone, Uncle Joe smashed his fist through the window, landing a blow to his face. The sacrifice of his hand was of no consequence in appeasing his anger.

Uncle Joe confided in me that he knew he would eventually come to a crossroads in life. He would have to either follow the downward trail of his Nave predecessors or fight to take the higher road. He chose to fight. Turning away from his evil trajectory and avoiding the criminal life, he went to work for GMC and also started buying and selling old houses. He showed me that it was possible to escape a criminal future, but that seemed incredibly boring to me.

Was the price of stability really worth it?