

Peek Over My Shoulder

By Ron Hafer

[musical interlude]

Speaker 1:

In this room this morning, I know several of us, maybe even a lot of us were especially pulled by the Holy Spirit during that time of worship. I wonder if as we continue in prayer if maybe two or three of you might be willing to stand up and pray out what has the Lord laid on your heart during that time, and pray a blessing for the rest of us. Let's bow our heads. As the Spirit draws you would you stand up and bless us? Hallelujah, you are worthy Lord and so we open our hearts to receive the preaching of your Holy Word for the sake of our risen King Jesus and the Kingdom that He is building and so that we might love Him more and be more effectively used of you. Amen.

Amen. Good morning. Who am I and why am I standing here? My name is Andrew Brain, and I had stetson's position several years ago. But I had the joy of leading the Thursday undergrad chapels for a couple years and working with today's speaker in the chaplain's office, Ron Hafer. Alright. You know what I'm talking about. Ron Hafer is a sinner saved by grace. That's all the intro he told me I was allowed to give. With his permission, I'm going to go a little bit beyond that. Ron Hafer stepped onto the Biola campus as a freshman in 1957 at the downtown campus.

To this day Ron Hafer is the only man to have ever successfully tight rope walked between the two pole or the two towers of the old downtown building on a pole basically. Pipe. I guess it was a pipe. Phenomenal. For forty two years, Ron went on to serve Biola University and retired as

Hafer: Peek Over My Shoulder

chaplain in May of 2008. How many of you are at his farewell ceremony? All right. Some of you know what I'm talking about. Ron Hafer is a man who loves the Lord. He is one of the most sought after preachers in Southern California, and he is going to clearly explain God's truth to your heart. So, give him heaven reverend. The smart money's on you coach. To this day, the tallest chapel in Biola history, Ron Hafer.

Ron Hafer:

Well, thank you Andrew. What a pleasure to be back with you. About a year and a half ago, when I retired, the alumni office asked if I might put a few thoughts together in writing which is looking more and more like a book all the time. Will you bind my book? Raise your hands. Good. Take a picture of that. In that book, I've I have chapters like my junior high years. Or a 1957 student at a Bible Institute downtown Los Angeles. In the old days without the wonderful GPS that would let even guys not get lost on a road trip. We would lay out maps and take off, and there would be sign posts.

In my writing of this journal which basically is a little bit of my journey in my years at Biola, they nobody has limited me in what I can say. I'm finding that although it's fun to talk about events, what really excites me is to speak about people who have impacted my life. And when they ask if I would speak, and I said yes! Yes! Thank you! Thank you! Yes, you can't back down. You said I could. I'm going to be there. Then I said what I really to do is share my journey. Little bit of my story. So, for the next few moments I'm going to let you kind of peek over my shoulder actually that breaks down because I have to be like well, never mind, it's the thought that counts.

And you can kind of peek over my shoulder as I share not the entire journal of a 71-year-old man but of an individual who has incredibly impacted my life. If he were to walk in this morning in fact I asked Stetson could we fly him in? No, it's a low budget program. So, if he were to walk in here, my father, well, it would rather be remarkable because he died last year, so that would be kind of scary, but now if he did, you would say, whoa, they look a little bit alike, but of course, he's a lot bigger. He's 5 foot 9.

He had bushy red hair in his youth. Big baby blues. And sober, my dad was probably the funniest man that I ever met. But by his own admission, he was and he claimed to be and wanted the title all by himself, the town alcoholic. He usually, even when he went to bed, was smoking a big ugly black cigar. God forgive me, I still love the smell. I don't know. But I sniff gasoline as well, so it doesn't matter. And he had a violent temper. He had a filthy mouth. A filthy mind. And he was what Scripture calls in the booming diction of the King James a striker.

He hit people. He loved to rumble. And I loved all of that because he married my mother that worked out really well and she was very sincere person, but she was a pagan, and my dad was a pagan, and my brother was a pagan, and I was a pagan, and we loved every bit of it, and I'd be ashamed to tell you how much of my father's booze I consumed long before I hit junior high years. My, I remember not one but a number of occasions where my father would pick a fight and he always won. And he won because he was mean and gnarly and a dirty fighter. And add to all of that, he could take a punch. You say, does does an incident come to mind? Thank you for asking. Yes.

We were outside the Magnet Inn, lovely name. My brother and I were told to stay in the car. We didn't. My father and mother went in, did the Texas two stomp for a while. Then, we went to the back door and watched the ally door swing open as my father and the combatant for the night were ready to rumble and they did. And this guy massive, monstrous guy, maybe 6 foot tall, ripped off his shirt and I said to my brother, what is that on his body? And my brother said that's hair. That's chest hair. The Hafers do not have chest hair. I'm not going to say any more about that, but just let your mind wonder.

And my father came out and he ripped off his shirt because that's what combatants do. And of course it was a good defense because my father was so white. He was almost blue. And the guy would go Ow. And then my father would deck him, which he did. So we punched the guy, the guy dropped. We said, yay. But we actually wanted him to get back up because you know one blow rumbles aren't as exciting and they don't sell.

You know? Well the guy stayed down but the guy's wife yelled at my father. I know exactly what she said. But I won't tell you exactly. Something like this. You bad person. Or something like this. Picked up a rock, a rock from the street, and threw it at my father.

She was as far away as we are here, maybe 10 feet, and I believe God has a great sense of humor. And I think He winked at Michael the archangel and said, shall we, let's. And that rock travelled and literally if she had placed it in my father's forehead, it couldn't have been neater than the upside down V, not for victory that creased his life for the rest of his life. He went down. He lost round two. My brother, we piled my father who was bleeding profusely but feeling no pain and my brother who was in the fourth grade drove the car home, so we were a really strange strange

bunch. Strange pagan bunch. But we were loving every bit of it because that's Scripture says the pleasures of the world endure for a season and that was our season.

Well, we moved to Colorado from the Texas Oklahoma oil fields, and I entered junior high, found a girl within a foot of my height. She was taller in case you wanted to know, and I made my move. I asked her if she would like to go somewhere with me, and she said no, but would I want to go somewhere with her. And of course, you've guessed it already. If not you can buy the whole [inaudible]. And so, the following Sunday, I went to church with her actually to Sunday school and thought I got ripped off because we went to a thing called "Opening Exercises," and then the guys to a boys' class and the girls went with the girls.

And I thought well, I got snookered on this one, so we screwed around for half an hour, didn't listen, messed around. Well you understand. Thanks for nodding. And at the end of the half hour and the teacher didn't care cause he was on a contract. He's like, I can do this half an hour. I read from this manual, and it was all greasy and had peanut butter and everything, and he didn't vary. And then, at the end, there were four or five questions, and he's done. His contract is over for the day. He has served his time. So he turned to the little guy on his right. That was me.

Then he asked a question. He asked a question about this lesson, and no one had listened. I certainly had not listened, and he asked me, "Could you, Ronald, could you give us a [inaudible] third cousin and her [inaudible]?" And I said, No, no. And they all giggled and laughed, and they thought how shameful. Then, he asked them, and they knew the answer. How did they know the answers they had not been listening? Because they have been doing this for years. They screwed

around, but they heard the same stories year after year, so in frustration, I went home to my father who was knocking down Coors, America's fine light beer with his buddies.

They were not watching or listening to Charles Stanley or James Dobson, folks on the family. They were knocking down beers and telling dirty stories. And I said, "Dad." He said, "Where have you been?" And I said, "to church." And they laughed. They thought that probably is the best joke that anyone could ever say. So I thought, "Goodies" in a good mood. So, I said, "Dad, do we have a Bible?" And he got a little red. He said, "Of course, we have a Bible. Your uncle is a Baptist minister. We love God. Of course. Everybody in America has a Bible."

I said, "Could I borrow the Bible?" He said, "Of course. Sit right here." And he left, and he had no concept if there was a Bible, but in the basement, and he was gone long time, but his buddies didn't care because that just gave them their share of course America's [inaudible]. And he came upstairs and was blowing the dust off of this book. And it said on the front "Holy Bible" and on the side it said, Gideon. You know where you get a Gideon? You steal it from the motel room.

He handed me the hot Bible [inaudible]. And of all things, I began to read stories of all things from the life of Christ. Well, my father and mother on Sunday nights would walk arm in arm and people would say, "Why look how precious Jay and Esther out on their Sunday night walk?" But the ones who knew, knew my father was getting sober enough to go to work because that's just what happens with alcoholics. And if you didn't walk it off, you didn't make it. On the way was the church where now I was attending.

On occasion, on Sunday nights, Patsy, she wasn't really my girl, but I called her that because she's never been here to deny it. Well, there she is. My Patsy would allow me to sit in the balcony on Sunday night during missionary films. And the deacons did not patrol the balcony and so we would, you know, Patsy loved Jesus, but she enjoyed a little fellowship. So never mind. Let your mind wander, but then exit that from the story. Well, my mom and dad would sit on the church porch and because they actually, this was kind of a little hokey church, country western, and they sang it with a kind of nasal, and it fit our family. We were kind of, Okay so God Bless You if you're from Oklahoma. I'm sure God deep down loves you, but.

So they were sitting on the porch and listening to these songs and singing. My dad was singing with all his might. He was saying he was a pagan. Yes. Did he have a good voice? Actually pretty good. How did he know the songs? He didn't know it. He just was making it up you know because that's the way my father. And the deacon and he would be smoking his stogie, and the smoke would be wafting in on the saints. And an elder [inaudible] size and inability to smile would come out and say to my father, "Jay," because they all knew him, he had punched most of them out, "would you like to put out your cigar?" My dad would say, "Would you like to eat the cigar?"

The guy would say, "No, on second thought, you just puff away dude." And as he sat there, it struck him on occasion they could come in. A little preacher who was from Kansas and gave it his best shot. Three years at some little Bible institute somewhere in the middle of the flat lands of Kansas. But this little guy knew how to tell people about Jesus. And he was a door-knocker. So he would come and bang on the door of my dad's home where we lived as well, but my dad

worked the night shift, so he wanted to sleep in today. And this little preacher would actually have my dad get out of bed and he would witness to him, and my father would say, "if you come here again, I'm going to hit you in the mouth."

And the little preacher was fearless. Absolutely fearless. And my brother and I were so fascinated to see what would happen if dad deck him, but he never did. And the little preacher would say, "You can hit me, but you can't keep me from loving you." And my father could not resist that. So more out of curiosity on Sunday nights on occasion, my mom and dad would come into that church. And they didn't know any better, so they sat in the front rows. They thought those were the best seats. No one fought for those seats. And there they sat.

Well with the moments that remained, they said to use phrases like that when I was going to Talbot. It builds false hope. And makes people think the message is wrapping up when it really isn't. But moving right along, "Billy! Brother Billy James Hargess from Wichita Falls, Texas was an evangelist who named sin and who was in town for a week. And his evangelistic services started on Sunday night and my mom and my dad are in the third row, closer than anyone. And this little preacher named every sin in the book that he could think of got most of them on my dad's list.

And I thought halfway through his message this was the old days, you guys don't remember this. But there was a program called "This is your life." And halfway through, actually a good-looking babe would come out with a card and she would hold it over some yokel's head, and this is your life. Farbly marble. And then they would go on with the program. Well I just figured Billy James

had nailed my dad, and they would come out and say, "This is your life? Jay Hafer. But the preacher, as preachers have a tendency to do, he slipped it in on them and all of us.

And he told the story of the cross and the passion and the death of Christ. And he did it in a pretty swift move, and as I was looking at the clock as many of you have done as well and even when you're looking down, you're not checking freckles. I know what you're doing. I was looking at the clock constantly, and I was thinking first of all, I thought these guys were rough, but I had read "Ye, verily, thee in doubt, Jesus with the [inaudible] in the temple." I figured he can take these suckers.

But halfway through, I realized he could. He wasn't going to. And I realized a leaven, I don't think quite 12 yet that Jesus Christ was gonna, they were going to get him. He was gonna die. I did not know the story. And in the story he did. Billy James probably got Jesus resurrected in that message as well, but I don't remember that. I just remember being broken-hearted in the balcony and crying publicly. And my brother who by now is making a move on Betsy's cousin and was reaching across and wacking me for my tears, and I didn't know that you were not allowed emotion during religious services.

Then Billy James Hargess from Wichita Falls, Texas did an amazing thing after naming the sins of all the people and telling us that those sins drove Jesus to the cross where he died and was buried and rose again. He said, "Now I would like to ask all of you who were responsible for that to walk down here in front of all these people." And I sat there and I thought that guy doesn't know how to sell cars. You don't tell him, "You dirty scudge. You dirty, rotten. You pagan.

Would you stand before all of us?" And I thought, absolutely no way. My dad said to my mom, "We're going." My mom said, "I'm not going." Would implicate me in that. Two people responded during Billy James week of evangelistic service. Only two.

Mom left. Hauled out of there as fast as she could. And dad walked down in front of all those people and could not speak. We have never seen my father emotionally moved and I know what was happening now, but I didn't then. The power of the Holy Spirit of God had moved through the word of God in the life of a pagan. And that pagan was so convicted that he could not speak his own name. Didn't matter if everybody knew him. Preacher said, "Did you come, Jay because you're a sinner?" His head nodded a little bit. 800 other heads went "Yeah. Whoo! Whoo!" Major sin or we're talking sinner here. And you're coming to respond to the claims of Jesus Christ.

You want Christ your Savior. He said, "All right. Let's pray." My father couldn't even pray out loud. They took him into the side room, which is my brother often called it, "the room." He said a lot of people have gone in there, counseling room. Many have never come out. My father came out an hour later. Came home. My mom was so ticked off, she could barely wait until he walked in the room. He kicked the door open and he yelled, "bye! Bleepedy. Bleepedy. I've gotten religion." You would say, "I've come to Christ. By the grace of God, I've been saved. I've been born again. I'm a new man in Jesus." But my father said, "I've gotten religion."

Mom yelled at him. Didn't matter. Dad grabbed her, bent her over. My mom's what we would call a fully bodied woman. Bent her over. Planted a kiss right smack on her lips. My brother yelled "religion has brought sex to the kitchen." We thought was a great line. Next day mom

went to work, dad did not. Dad sat on the porch with the preacher, learning how to be an instant Christian. His soul got saved that night. We thought maybe his mouth got saved about five years later. But on the porch with the preacher, knocking down Coors, America's fine lite beer and smoking black stogies. He was finding out that you should start to have a family altar and with this I close which is always good for three more minutes.

So that night, we ate. Then, my father said everybody shut up. We had friends over with us, and so, when father spoke, we all listened. And he said, we're not going to tell dirty filthy stories anymore. Last night I got religion, and my little buddied giggled, and then my father looked at them, and the veins were popping out, and they "Oh okay." My father said, "pastor said that we should start a family altar." I loved it. I've been to Sunday school. I know you dug a hole and you had rocks and wood and you had a sacrifice. I thought, "we can sacrifice my brother." But that wasn't what he had in mind.

He said, "Oh, we read from the Bible. Holy Bible." And get in, blows it off, and he begins with our first worship, family altar. If you've screwed it up, this should really bring you hope. Father began to read. Us begat fuzz. From Numbers or something. [inaudible] got Nerhu but Nerhu begat a four syllable guy. [inaudible] My brother grabbed the Bible. He says, "Why sure? He begat [inaudible]." And threw the Bible. We laughed. Everyone laughed except my father, who hit my brother in the mouth. My brother's feet hit the table. I'd love to have it on slo-mo.

Oh we do have it. Thank you. And the table flipped, and the peas and gravy and everything, and we're sitting there, and the milk is dripping, and my brother's in the corner. My dad has a little

skin knuckle from where he got. And I thought I love family worship. I love family altar. Let's do it three times a day. Dad grabs Dell. That's my brother. Slams him into the chair and yells into his nose. We're gonna read the Bible every bleepedy bleepedy night to which my brother responded, "Fine with me dad."

So God saved the town alcoholic. And the town alcoholic's wife fell passionately, embarrassingly in love with her husband. X-rated. We used to get home and then my mom and dad would say, "Don't you have something to do. Leave. It's midnight. Go! Get out! Go!" you know. And my brother came to faith in Jesus Christ. And his little brother came to faith in Jesus Christ. This very thing that He, God, who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Did dad have slips? He did not. For 60 years, he walked in sobriety and integrity. And 40 of those, he was a hospital chaplain. Led more people to Jesus than I'll ever speak to in my life. An amazing, amazing grace that saved a wretch like me and thee. 42 years of ministry to students in having a chance to impact them for the grace of God. By His wonderful grace, He saves sinners and that's chapter one of my journey. And thank you for listening in and looking over my shoulder.

As we conclude, I think it would be great if the worship team came up. And let's sing a song and reflect on what it means not just to hear of the grace of God but to yield our lives to that same Savior. Take me life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee. May it be your song. May it be your prayer and mine. And as the Pepsi and Geritol generation sing, God will hear us sing and He will

Hafer: Peek Over My Shoulder

know our hearts.

[musical interlude]

Speaker 2:

I know we're not all on the same place to sing that, but I just hope that you'll open yourselves to be honest with the Lord and if that is where you are, then keep singing it throughout the day. If it's not where you are, keep singing it all throughout the day. Just pray that would be our lives are. Just surrender. Totally surrender in everything. With that, we'll send you out. Just be in that spirit and peace be with you.