

An Excerpt

from

Sickle Cell Disease / Sickle Cell Trait:

The Triumphant Struggle of One Man



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There and then I lost all faith in this doctor because I knew he did not have a solution for my issues. While he was speaking, I lost interest in what he was saying about sickle cell. I was looking at the cars, when suddenly I felt as though a hand had twisted my head from south to east in an upward direction towards the ceiling. My attention was drawn to this large picture on the wall close to the ceiling. It was about four feet long and twenty inches wide displaying all different types of fruits and vegetables. I left his office not remembering much of what he had said to me.

My mind was focused on the picture on the wall. It became a fixed image in my mind all the way home; it was all I could think about. At times I wondered why I had not seen it when I walked in. When I entered his office I saw all his certificates hanging on the wall but I did not see the amazing gift that was there for me. I thought this was destined to work out this way: Mike called me for a job at the car dealership; he introduced me to this doctor from the Philippines and then I waited a month before I could see him. Everything was timed perfectly. This was another lesson I had to learn; that nothing happened before its time.

I owned a white Ford Fairlane 1968 model. I named her Betsy and kept talking to Betsy about what had happened at the doctor's office. I did not mention it to anyone else, not even Re, because they all knew I was on all medication; that doctors had requested me to see a psychiatrist and on top of that, I had tried to commit suicide. I kept this information to myself lest they deemed me insane.

I got home that evening and lay across the bed. Re came by later on and brought me some food. She was eager to know how the doctor's visit had gone but I told her that I couldn't remember everything; all I remembered was that he wanted to know if my mother or anyone in my family had sickle cell disease or sickle cell trait and I told him as far as I knew, no one in my family had it. She kept insisting.

I said, "Why are you asking me all these questions?"

She said, "I want to know."

I then informed her that I wanted to be alone. She asked whether I was coming over later, I said I didn't know and she left.

My mind was on that picture all evening. I didn't sleep well that night. The next morning I got up at four o'clock. I took a ride on the turnpike heading west. Why? Because a few weeks before I went to see the doctor, I was on that same turnpike in that area and I saw a new food store called Buy Rite. It was a new chain-food store that came into the metropolitan area. I got there about half an hour later; it was extremely cold so I kept Betsy running to keep me warm. I parked in a particular way so as not to attract the police that drove back and forth. I did not want it to seem that I was there to hold up the store.

Around half past six, a tractor and trailer pulled on to the compound and went around the back of the store. I tried to get the driver's attention but no one paid any attention to me. Finally, I saw people going into the store and I followed them. The store had opened for early shoppers. I waited until I got some attention then finally this gentleman came up to me and asked whether he could help me and I told him that I had

seen some trucks pulling in and going around to the back. He informed me that they brought produce and groceries. I then asked where the produce came from. He inquired why I wanted that information and I told him I merely wanted to know where I could get fresh fruits and vegetables. Unfortunately, he could not provide the information. I looked around for a little while and left. My aim was to find out as much as I could about the picture that I carried around in my head.

I inquired at other stores about foodstuff. I would follow the same pattern: drive early to the food stores and ask the same question about where they obtained their food. Some of the managers did not even know where their food came from. So I had to get to the truck drivers to find out where they were picking up their loads. Finally I was at a particular store and I asked a gentleman where the vegetables came from and he promised to find out. He was not the truck driver; he was just unloading the vegetables from the back. On his return he informed me that the driver picked up his delivery from Hunts Point warehouse. That was all the information he gave me and that was sufficient.

After weeks of chasing trucks early in the morning, my next step was to find out what days the goods were delivered and when was the best time to purchase them. It was a little tricky; I had to learn the system, how to get these different kinds of food.