

Cheeto Cat

The Cedric Gilbride Story

Excerpt from

The Dog's Got Hold of the Chicken!

Missing Eggs and Ann Quinland's Thighs

Jim Lopez

Cedric Gilbride, sixty-three-years-old, stood a lanky six-foot-two-inches, with a globing gut and tattoos on his arms--three which depicted hearts in various fashions with the names of three different women. Another one was sloppy but legible, inscribed was the name "Ann". One sat on the middle of the outside of his right forearm: a rat standing on its hind legs, wears a hat and trench coat with its tail protruding from out under the backside. A cigarette hangs from its mouth. Cedric's Social Security Number is also inked underneath the vato rat. Cedric's hair is long and stringy, but puffed out, resembling a Q-tip cotton swab. It is bleached whitish-yellow. He keeps a bottle of Downey Softener in the bathtub, explaining, "Hair is a fabric and Downey is a fabric softener." His freaky hair due is often covered by a ghetto cap, which compliments his lengthy goatee. His nose is bloated from alcohol consumption and is severely scared from acne, drunken bar fights and having been bitten by a weenie dog. Actually, it was my weenie dog, Shultz (we had to put him down), who was turned into an alcoholic and went completely mad after my uncle moved in with my mother, sister and me, feeding my dog a steady diet of Thunder Bird Wine. Cedric wore Wrangler jeans, an ordinary T-shirt, which bore a Marlboro Cigarette decal. His rugged brown cowboy boots were weathered. My grandfather Chauncy's (who drank himself to death in Henderson, Nevada) .38 revolver was stuffed into Cedric's reclining chair, a highball of shit whisky sat within arm's reach. He lives in a clap-board house the size of a match-box in Coalgate, Oklahoma, and he has adopted a thick Okie accent. Uncle Cedric Gilbride, an American Pollock-Mic, an adolescent ward of the State of California, drifter, biker, box car rider, cemetery dweller, Vietnam vet, lover of booze, drugs and women alike, an artist of sorts, a collector of a government nut check, man of comedy, a bull shitter and a man of volatile unpredictability.

Cedric: "I don't know. What y'all want to really know?"

Jim: *Tell me about your childhood.*

"Life is like having manual air-bags in your vehicle. Something you've got to blow up yourself."

What the hell are you talking about? Tell me about Old Lady Clayton?

"Old Lady Clayton, huh? She was an old lady. Always got whooped from her. Lay in bed, didn't go to sleep right away, she'd bring in the bug can, and spray me down in bed, saying she was goin' to kill me. I remember one time, my sister Nancy, she did something to me, which I can't remember, but I didn't like it.

She crawled out the bedroom window in the middle of the night and took a shit in the back yard. When Old Lady Clayton found shit with corn in it she knew one of you kids shit in the yard. My mother, your sister, Nancy, told Old Lady Clayton that it was you who shit in the yard. Old Lady Clayton beat you for shitting in the yard, but it wasn't you who shit in the yard. It was Nancy.

(Laughing) Is that what your mother told you? Well...Nancy had a little old water turtle and I took it out of the little plastic dish she kept it in and I turned the frying pan on, and I toss the turtle in. And that old turtle started dancin'. The fastest I ever seen a turtle dance. They're slow, but when their feet starts heatin' up they dance real fast. I got my ass whooped for that, and Nancy laughed about it. So I was goin' a get even. I was just a little kid, probably about, oh...seven, eight-years-old. And Old Lady Clayton was inside of her living room, relaxing in her reclining chair, watching the news or somethin' like that. And I crept up in back of her with a big ol' butcher knife, jerked her head on back, held the blade up to her throat and told her I was goin' kill her."

Did you tie her up?

"No! I didn't tie her up. Hell, I couldn't get her, she was bigger than me. Remember, I was just a little kid, somewheres around eight. I remember Nancy went inside Old Lady Clayton's bedroom, because she had a phone back there and sis' called our dad. So I went over and locked the front door and everything. I forget how they ever talked me out of it. But no cops ever showed up. My dad did, and somehow he talked me out of it. I wasn't goin' kill her

anyway. I was just tired of all the ass whoopin's that I was gettin' from her. And shit...Nancy caused me to get.

"We had to go to bed early, before the sun went down. And from the hallway of our bedroom, if you looked down into the end of the hallway, you could see into the living room and watch T.V. But to get a better view we would crawl along the hallway hiding ourselves. Since Nancy was bigger than I was, she made me stoop down in front of her so she could look over my head, and then we were both able to watch T.V. She thought it was funny. We would be watching T.V. and she'd push me right out in front of Old Lady Clayton. She'd run off to bed and here I am layin' on the floor in front of Old Lady Clayton's feet and shit. She'd grab the razor strap, chasing me."

How long did you live with Old Lady Clayton?

"Ah, hell I was too young. I don't remember. I really couldn't tell ya."

When did you leave her "care"?

"That saame day after the butcher knife situation. Yeah. I forget where my dad took me that night. I remember shortly though after, I lived with some friends of his named Chuck and Eleanor Robinson. Eleanor was a real ding-bat. She had three boys of her own and a little baby, that is, she was pregnant at the time. Her husband Chuck was a hell-of-a nice guy. But her, she'd beat my ass all the time for doin' nothin'. I was able to whoop her boys if I wanted too, but shit, she used to have her boys whoop on me, and she said if I ever raised my hand while they were whoopin' on me, that she would beat me. I remember, shit, she used to have all three of them jump me at one time and just whoop the shit out of me, and I couldn't do anything to raise my hands. Because if I did, you know, she'd beat the shit out of me. I remember one time I was mad at her one morning. After Chuck went to work and she'd got the kids off to school, I was always the last one to leave in the morning, she started beatin' on me again. When she was done she went back to bed. Well, after I finished the breakfast dishes I went into the bathroom and set fire to the closet in the bathroom, and then I went off to school. At the end of the day I came home like I didn't know shit. She never did find out that I'd set fire to the house."

You burned the whole house down?

"Nah. Just the bathroom and a portion of the hallway. They saved the house."

"Then, probably a couple months after that, she actually put my head through the sheet rock, through the walls. She told Chuck that I was sweepin' and I hit the wall with the broom stick and knock holes in it. But she'd beat my head up real bad up along the wall. She just had the baby. Her little daughter was about three months old at the time. I wanted revenge so bad I went over to where the baby was layin' in the crib, and I stuck the pillow over her head and was gonna' suffocate that little rug rat. I smothered her head there for oh, probably about ten seconds. I finally took the pillow off the baby's head, you know. The baby didn't die." (Starts chuckling.)

How old were you then?

"Ah...probably about, between nine and ten, somewheres around there."

Where was your sister?

"I have no idea where she was. Probably still with Old Lady Clayton."

So how long did you stay with the Robinson's?

"Mmm...Probably about, oh...around two years."

These people were friends of your father?

"Yeah. Well Chuck was. He was a hell-of-a nice guy, Chuck was. He never knew nothin' that went on over at the house, the beatins and everything that I got. And I mean for nothin'. I mean literally. I mean absolutely nothin'."

Why do you think she did it?

"Huh?"

Why do you think she beat you?

"Oh, she was an epileptic and that. She had seizures all the time. And whenever she had them seizures, she'd come out of them she was mean as hell. And when she'd have them Chuck was usually at work, and I'd have to go in and hold her down and make sure she didn't hurt herself or anything. And I was just a little kid."

How old were her boys?

"They were all about my age. There was one that I think was one year older than me. But, hell. I mean poor Chuck, he still to this day--if he is still living, I don't think he is, 'cause he was suppose' to have died years ago from cancer, but he never knew nothin' that was goin' on over there."

Was that in Rosemead, California?

"Uh...thaaat was in...Temple City."

Where did you go after that?

"After... the Robinson's house, uh, let me see, my gosh, I think...oh, I went to, uh, it was called Lathrop Hall, Home for Children. And they kept me in there..."

Why did you go there?

"Because I ran away from Chuck and Eleanor's. It's now a juvenile hall in L.A., but it used to be called Lathrop Hall. I was in there, then they took me to the Episcopal Church Home for Children. But I was always running away from there. I was there for a couple of years. I was in Lathrop Hall for a year and then in the Episcopal Church Home for Children. I stayed there probably, oh probably, for about another two years. And then after that, I kept running away 'cause I loved being on the road. I'd hop freight trains and go to Arizona. Just jump a freight and take off."

Was that when you were at the Episcopal Home?

"Yeah, well nah. I was runnin' away before then. I'd run away from Chuck and Eleanor's and then..."

Where would you go when you ran away from Chuck and Eleanor's?

"Anywheres. Out in the brush, out in the country, sleepin' in the bushes. Check out neighborhoods. And when I'd see people go to work early in the morning I'd find a way in their house while they at work. I would go in, help myself to the kitchen and make me some breakfast."

When you were ten-years-old?

"Oh, yeah. Ten and older than that. Say eleven, twelve. I wasn't *breakin' in* the houses. Legally you could call it *breakin' in* because I wasn't asked in. I'd slide open a window and crawl in. I cooked my meal for myself and clean up the dishes, take a shower, do my clothes in the washer and dryer. While they washing I'd kick back and watch T.V. Then I'd leave the houses as if nothin' ever happened, put all the dishes up. There might be a few eggs short, but I mean who keeps a count on their eggs, you know? (Gives a quick laugh under his breath.)

"Uh, after that, uh, I was at...Lathrop Hall, which was turned into McLaren Hall. I left

there the day John F. Kennedy got killed. What was that? November 22, 1963 I believe. They shipped me to a foster home in Cudahy, California and that was with the Sauney's. That was their last name. I had a good time there. I kept runnin' away all the time, but I liked the people."

That was before you went to the Episcopal home?

"No, that was way after. That was after that.

"I remember the first time I fell in love. I was sixteen-years-old. I should say fell in love with an older woman. Her name was Ethel Ann Quinland. No, not Ethel. Her name was Ann Quinland, and she had three kids. Her husband was in prison for hanging paper, you know, forgin' checks. I was sixteen-years-old and she was thirty-two. She taught me everything about how to please a woman. First pussy I ever ate. She was a gal who lived down the end on Elizabeth Street.

"But I kept runnin' away from there."

Did you live with Ann for a while?

"No, no. They picked me up and sent me up to reformatory fire camp, up there in La Verne, up in the San Bernardino mountains, cuttin' fire breaks. We went to school, uh, I forget, a couple of hours a day, and the rest of the day was spent up on the mountains scrappin' fire breaks. They still got all them fire breaks up on them mountains. I put in sweat on every one of those."

Do you ever think of this woman?

"Ann Quinland was her name. I always wish I could find her. Just curious how she made it...life...you know...me being sixteen and her thirty-two. Damn, that was somethin' you know. My fiiiirst woman. I'll be damned, she was a stone fox. I tattooed her name on my leg. My very first tattoo."

Did you tattoo it yourself?

"Yeah, sure did. Tattooed it myself."

So when you say that she taught you how to please a woman, do you mean she guided you in oral pleasures?

"No, no, no. That was somethin' I tried on my own. Stuff I read about when I was a kid. Read about all that. It seemed nasty and I had to try it. It was good (starts laughing). That's why I have this ol' goatee (Cedric says, srtokes his chin hairs, pulling on the end of it). It keeps me

from gettin' rug burns.

"But after runnin' away from there they caught me in Arizona. I hopped a freight train and took off, run away from the foster home. Just took off. But they picked me up, brought me back. Put me up in the camp where I was buildin' them fire breaks. Let me out...let me see...I must a been around sixteen when I got out. That's when I went out on my own. I told the judge I wanted a job, and that I wasn't gonna finish school. And the judge told me, he said, 'Well, Cedric,' he says, 'if I turn you loose on your own, you get a job, and if you're not gonna be goin' a school,' he says, 'if you do anything wrong we can try ya as an adult.' But I never got in trouble. Went to work. Got a job in a car wash. Had my own apartment. Bought me a little car, a little DKW, and I didn't even have a driver's license. In fact I never even had a driver's license until I was twenty-one-years-old.

"At eighteen I joined the service. Went in December 27, 1967. I was down on Sunset Strip selling the *Free Press Newspaper* and the *Underworld*."

What was the "Underworld"?

"It was another newspaper like the *Free Press*. A radical newspaper. The hippie generation newspaper. Used to sell it in front of Pandora's Box there on Sunset Strip. Went in and signed up for the Army. They said I had to report in Decembee but before I went in, me and my buddy, we hitch-hiked to Memphis, Tennessee, to party. That was the first time I ever seen a flyin' saucer. You want to hear about that?"

Sure.

"Me and my buddy we were hitch-hikin'. We both had long hair. It was gettin' about evenin' time, dusk, out on the highway in Arizona. Long stretch. A couple of Indians pulled over and we jumped in. They were party guys, drinkin' and that. It was gettin' dark out there, and you know, we passed around a joint and smoked it. We drank a little wine while cruisin' down the highway. It was warm out in the evenin' air, so I had my window down. All the windows was down. As I stuck my head out to get some desert air I noticed a light above us and I glanced up. Looked right at that globe. And I told the guys, I says, 'Hey! There's a flyin' saucer above us!' These Indians started laughin', 'Hee, hee, hee, hee', and that. Like I was tryin' a make a funny joke or somethin'. And I says, 'No guys, there's a flyin' saucer up there.' Driver turned

around and stuck his head out the window and I tells him, 'Well, look out there, up above us.' Well he seen it. It was probably about, oh, probably about a hundred feet above us. The driver jerked the wheel and we ended up off the road and into the desert. Got stuck out there. Them old Indians, they were scared shitless. I jumped out of the car and started wavin' and flaggin' them. Tryin' a flag the suckers down, 'cause that's my ultimate. My ultimate high would be to take a cruise on a UFO. And like I say, they're here amongst us right now. My prediction is, sometime within the years 2013 and 2014, I mean we're goin'. They're here now, but then we'll all know they're here. If we don't start firin' on them when they do show up, they'll be here in peace. And I really believe in, uh, the reason the US Federal Government is turnin' around and gettin' all these countries to break down the walls and barriers and everything like this here, and becomin' friends with Russia and that, puttin all these space programs out in space, is due to the fact that the United States knows that, hey, they're on their ways here. And instead of fightin' amongst each other we might have to unite to fight against them. So we better works together, all as one to save our world from them. Which I think is just a bunch of paranoid people. Because I believe they're here to save the earth. Because we're part of their ecosystem, their selves and that. And if we destroy our planet we're goin' probably end up destroyin' the solar system itself. But they will be here. Mark my word, if anything, sometime between 2013 and 2014. And the Federal Government is goin' have to admit to it too."

Admit that they know about it?

"Oh, yeah! Admit that they've been here and the U.S. Government has known about it for years.

"Oh. There's some kool-aid in there, Jimmy, if you want some," (offers me as I am going through the refrigerator).

Do you want some of this stuff? Blond Shag? (I offer Cedric some shag tobacco)

"No."

It's pretty good.

"You want some pot?"

No.

"No. O.K...A little bit of shrooms?"

No. Not now. You say the first time you ever saw a UFO, you mean you saw them again?

"I like to watch stars, and Lord knows, you know, I've had plenty of time hitch-hikin' across the country. When you were a kid I'd be hitch-hiking making my way back to L.A. to come see you and your mamma and sister. And I've seen, uh...people say they're shootin' stars, but shootin' stars don't shoot off and then tack like a sail boat. You know tack off to one side, then tack off to another. I believe flyin' saucers are all maneuvered by some type of magnetism. If you tack a magnet, stick them back to back, you know, negative/negative or positive/positive and try to push them together they won't go. And if you rub them sideways you can actually feel the push of the magnet. They rock, in a resistant sort of way, from side-to-side. And I believe in some way UFO's got an artificial gravity engine of some sort that can tack off the earth's energy in all kinds of directions. If they tack in one direction they bounce, emitting artificial gravity from the bottom of their saucer where they can tack off the earth. This allows them to push themselves off to another tack and then tack again. This here is how they get their power.

"When I was a kid I use to play with magnets to try to figure out how and why they keep pushin' themselves away from each other."

Whatever, Max Plank. Did you like Old Lady Clayton?

"Like her?! Well hell, she was mean....She was senile."

Were there other kids living there?

"Yeah, yeah. She took care of other kids durin' the day. She was kinda like a baby-sitter durin' the day, and there was just me and your mamma and I think his name was Jeffrey. We were the only ones who stayed there all week long."

Where was your father?

"He was workin' in a sanitarium and workin' out of his brother's brass plating shop. He'd come around every once in a while and pick us up for an hour or two. None of our family was ever really close. I guess you know that. Your mamma says it's a dysfunctional family. It's not dysfunctional, due to the fact that our family has always been split apart. We've never had the chance to be functional towards each other. It's not dysfunctional. It's just that we were never functional to begin with. So we're not dysfunctional. Don't let her think that."

So then you went to Vietnam?

"Yeah. I went into the service."

Did you ever go to whore houses in Vietnam?

"I just about burnt one down.

Why the hell would you do something like that?

Me and my buddy went in one. Mammasuns are the ones who run the whorehouses.

Everyone calls her Mammasun. This was down in (Pateal) Phan Thiet and Mammasun wouldn't let my buddy in, cause he caused trouble in there before."

What beach?

"Phan Thiet. There was just a couple bars and whore houses. And ah, shit, my buddy was goin' go and burn a whorehouse down. I feel pretty good that I didn't do it and changed his mind. because I knew Mammasun. I'd bring her a carton of cigarettes and she'd give me money and some free pussy, not off Mammasun, but off any of the girls, you know.

"I used to run kinda like a black market over there."

What did you sell?

"Oh, heck. Anything: booze, cigarettes. Anything from a Class Six Store to a PX. I'd get it. Bring it off post. She'd ran a black market. I'd sell to her and she'd sell it to someone else."

Who did she sell it too?

"Shit. The Nationals. The regular people."

To the VC?

"I don't really know. But anything from the black market, ya know, they usually got some of it. They couldn't pronounce Bacardi Rum, they pronounced it Buckety Rum. I had a Class Six card. I was allowed something like five fifths a month, but I always had friends who were GI's, and they never drank. So I got merchandise off their Class Six card. I got the tobacco from people who didn't smoke too. I had a good time."

Do you remember the Mammasun's real name?

"Well, her last name was Pim. Everyone called her Mammasun or Ma Pim. P-I-M, I guess is how it would be spelled."

When did you get out of the service?

"Oh, let me see. February. What was it? I think it was February 17 of 71'. I pulled my three years. I wanted to make a career out of it, but I was on leave and I met my ex-wife."

You met her where?

"I met my ex-wife when I was on a leave in El Monte, California. I had less than six months to do in the service. I wanted to make a career out of it. I wanted to make thirty years out of it. At least twenty. But I figured if I was goin' be married to her for the rest of my life she should have somethin' to say about my career. And Lord knows, that one didn't work out. So I screwed up my career in the service." (Long silence)

Tell me another one of your outlooks on life.

"Life. How rough it is on everybody. You got to realize that you're goin' a take an ass kickin' through life. I mean, as soon as you come in life, and you got them ol' lips of some ol' pussy stretched over your head and you think you've got it made. Then the doctor grabs you by your ankles, whoops you up in the sky, slaps ya on the ass, kicks your ass, and makes ya cry. Then all through life ya do a little somethin' wrong, mamma and daddy beatin' your ass--kickin' ya, slappin' ya in the face. Then Uncle Sam, he's tryin' a teach ya to kill or kill someone else in these silly-ass wars. Takin' an ass beatin'. Don't pay your taxes, your goin' a jail. Uncle Sam is goin' a make ya cry, punish ya in some way. Then when you're dead, some mother-fucker takes needles and probes in ya, drains all the body fluid out of ya, and everything. Then throws ya in a cold hole. Throws dirt in your face. Even makes ya pay for that piece of ground that you're in. Shit, ya even gotta pay taxes on that piece of ground you're thrown in when they bury ya!"

"You heard the sayin', 'You don't throw the baby out with the bath water'? Well, I was the baby that you did throw out with the bath water, cause after I come clean they seemed to not want me and out the window I went."

Cedric got up and poured us some whiskey with a kool-aid chaser. We spent the rest of the day hanging out in his shack. His dog was begging for someone to throw his toy, so I abliged him. Hoppy, a Yorkshire Terrier, had only three legs. The forth one got stuck hanging out of the bottom of his cage at the vet's office when he was born and some rat came and chewed it off. Nobody wanted him and the vet was going to put him to sleep but Cedric brought him home. We

played with Hoppy, throwing his little brown bear on the linoleum floor. Missing his back leg Hoppy couldn't stop very well, so he would slide past his toy snapping at it, but he was happy.

A Poem by Cedric Gilbride

We are the Earths keeper
We are the Earths fertlizer
We are but shit.

Lets keep it clean
Or be wiped out
And be reduced to Dust

We are but the foul waste of an Orgazum
Mankind should have been flushed down
A toilet in a rubber

We are the Earth's keeper

For we are the cancer of the Earth
We Distroy everything in ower pass
We are the Earths Poison

The Tresure's not the Pleshuer
The Pleshuer is the Tresure