**Helping My Brother**

Part Twelve

By Randall Austin

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(Notes from the journal of Craig Soffel)

The Clackamas County Social Services building is a
massive affair.  Although it is only 12 stories high, it
covers the span of an entire city block.  It not only
house's the county's social services agency, it also is
the headquarters of Oregon state's Social Services
Authority.  The building contains everything from
holding cells, hearing rooms, auction rooms, show
rooms, the largest servant training center in the
state, as well as several retail stories serving the
needs of servant owners.  As a child the building
both fascinated and terrified me as I tried to imagine
what was taking place behind all of those windows.

As I made my way into the building with my dad and
Marty to the hearing room where Marty and I would
find out our fates, it was my hope that I wouldn't
have to find out what went on in the deeper recesses
of the building.

I had been nervous and upset for the entire week,
but now as dad, Marty, and I, took our seat in the
courtroom, I felt like crying from fear.  But I was
resolved that if I was sentenced to a term of
indenturement, I would not stay in the states.  The
only reason I attended the hearing and didn't skip
town was because I had found out that Social
Services was so backed up on their training
schedules, that if I were to be indentured, it would
be at least three weeks before there would be room
for me in the training program.  During that waiting
period my plan was to escape to Canada.

We didn't have to wait long for the judge and his
retinue to enter the hearing room and pronounce the
verdict.

The bailiff asked me to stand, and the judge spoke,
"Craig Alexander Soffel, the charges you made
against your brother, Martin, were brought about
because of ignorance of the law.  Unfortunately for
you, ignorance of the law is not an excuse for
someone who holds a handler's certificate, however
junior its reach and permissions.  Therefore, this
court fines you $5000 for the jeopardy in which you
placed your brother, Martin Soffel."

"Further, we have determined that for you to remain
eligible to serve as a servitor overseer in this State
of Oregon you must once again successfully take the
state's servitor handler's training and exam."

"Please visit the bursar after this hearing to arrange
payment of your fine and to hand over your state
issued handler's certificate, which we have deemed
invalid."

The judge banged his gavel and ordered Martin to
stand, "Martin Justin Soffel; in the interest of saving
the taxpayers of Oregon State costly reviews, it is
customary for our agency to review a servitor's
record and term of service every time a servitor's
dossier has cause to come before the review board.
Although your term of service was originally set at
four years, on review we have decided that a change
in your term of service is warranted."

"Martin Justin Soffel, on review of your record of
service this court finds you to have successfully
acclimated to servitude.  For that, you should be
proud of yourself.  We have reviewed the initial
charges brought against you by court order that
resulted in your receiving a term of indenturement of
four years; and we have taken into consideration the
charges against you brought by your brother, and
the single charge filed by your father.  Though the
charges brought by your brother, Craig, have been
shown to have been improperly rendered, we have
redressed that issue.   But in our review we,
nevertheless, can take into consideration the sum
and substance of all charges.  It is our verdict that
because of the success you have achieved as
servitor; and because of the pattern of willfulness
that constantly enters into your affairs at unguarded
moments; and because society and yourself are best
served by your remaining indentured; and because
the service you provide your family and society is
wholly salutary on your behalf; and because the
Oregon State Psychiatric Review Board has
determined you to be a recidivist; and because it
pleases both your immediate family and this court;
the State of Oregon hereby remands you to a term
of indenturement for life.  Martin Justin Soffel, you
are now the property of your father for him to do
with as he wishes."

"This court is adjourned."

Marty screamed, dad tried to calm him down, and
the bailiff snapped his fingers to summon the
guards. "Get him leashed and muzzled!"

Two guards quickly had Marty muzzled and leashed
as ordered, and the bailiff then ordered the guards.
"He is to be taken immediately into the surgery unit
to be surgically processed as a lifer!"

The bailiff saw dad and me and let us approach
Marty.  Dad hugged Marty, "It's going to be okay
son.  Some mistakes have been made.  But I think
we have all learned something from this experience."

As dad hugged Marty, Marty looked dazed.  I was
just as dazed as Marty was.  Dad spoke to us, "Why
don't you two boys hug each other and make up."

I eagerly hugged Marty, even though it was very
weird hugging a muzzled guy who was attached to a
leash held by a burly guard.  I told Marty that I loved
him, and was sorry for the mess up.  Marty didn't
say anything, but my apology must have moved him
because he was crying.