

It Is What It Is (Game Recognize Game) Ron Hardy 1 of 6

A Memoir of David August (Chapter 2)

As told to Ron Hardy

I ran into a couple of guys as I was at discharge processing station on. We were all in the same Battalion but in a different Companies. That's how we knew each another. They were from Shreveport, LA. That's where my father lived and it's the ancestral home of both my parents. I had lived in Shreveport for a short period during my high school days. I remembered the village type community spirit that loomed over the old neighborhood. I remember people places and things very well. It felt like a good direction for me to go. I caught a ride with them.

As I was sitting in the back seat of the car heading for Shreveport, I had no indication of what was to become of me or my life in general. That night on our journey, it rained cats and dogs as the old saying goes. I had never seen or been in a rain storm like that before. You couldn't see anything in front or in back except rain beating fiercely down on the wind shields and windows. There were some moments that I thought we weren't gonna make it, but I just laid back and went with the flow. I had nothing to lose and nothing to gain.. My life was in the hands of God. As one of the guys in the car and I began conversing, little did we know that he knew my father and family very well. His oldest brother Terrace Hopper had been a running buddy of my fathers back in the days.

When we got to Shreveport and they dropped me off at my Aunt Lena's house. My new friend Rod Hopper actually knew where my aunt lived. He and my cousin Donald whose nick name was Cool D as it turned out running buddies at one time. Rod and I started running together. Rod knew a lot of people around town. He was quite a character himself. Rod and I where running wild through Shreveport with

plenty of money to play with at least for that moment in time. Everybody from Cross town remembered me from the time I had been here. I was back in town. Fresh out of the Army with plenty of oats to sow.

We were everywhere the women were and Rod knew plenty of them all around town. We ran the streets hard for about 3 months unstoppable like chickens with their heads chopped off until my uncle Lester intervened. He told me it was time to slow down and handle my business. He told me a story, ' ' ' " When a baby eagle grows up and the time comes for him to leave the nest. The father eagle flies the baby eagle a long distance from the nest. He then drops him in the air and from there the baby eagle is on his own". His point was for me not to expect too much from my father or any man. I was now a man myself. My uncle Lester was aunt Lena's husband who was my mother's baby sister. He was always my favorite uncle although we were not biologically related. He told it the way it was. He didn't bar no holds for nobody. He was straight up. He loved his Early Times whiskey but as a World War II veteran he deserved it. His feet had been frost bitten from the extreme cold conditions during the war. He told me countless stories of his adventures in the army while in Germany fighting the Nazi's. He had a great love and admiration for my father. He would love to tell me about my father, David, Sr. David, Sr. seemed to be kind of a living legend in the roots part of town. He was the first Black man to drive a RC Cola truck which was something in the hood back in those days was a White-man's job. David, Sr owned and operated a few night clubs and was a big gambler back in the day. He was also a Mason and stuck close to the black community in the hood. He had no aspiration to be high profile in the white mans world. His stomping ground was the area they called "The Bottom". To this day most people are still afraid to be down in the Bottom.

In Shreveport, LA there was a lot to learn about the plight of Black people in America. I was now at the root of the Black man's experience in America. I often contemplated on many social issues. Take

for instance, in school we were taught the American dream concept. This is the land of freedom, opportunity and justice. Hard work will get you a great life with great rewards. Using that deduction one might be prone to think that the White people who lived in the nice fine houses and mini mansions were hard workers when just across the freeway where the Black people lived. The houses were small sub par and some dilapidated. One would assume that Black people were lazy and shiftless. I learned that to be not true. After months of running the streets with Rod. I got hired in the plant at Louisiana Industries a cement company. My father drove a cement truck there at that time. Except for management all the plant workers and drivers were Black. The work was exhausting and grueling. It certainly was not work for a lazy man. The pay was ok I guess but it wouldn't get you too far out of poverty. Johnny Guitar Watson released the song in 1976 "Ain't That a Bitch" it was now 1977 and that song describes the whole scenario. I worked there about 9 months and my father noticed that I was playing the streets at night and trying to work all day. One day he told me, "Either you should work or you should play the streets but don't try to do both. Pick one or the other. I don't care which one, but just pick one" The streets won that battle. I already had caught a fine little woman named Sara. She was about 6 years older than me. She was always looking good like a movie star. She played the streets with class. She wasn't a flat backer or what you would call a prostitute but she was one of the coldest shop lifters in the area. She dressed me and I was sharp as a tack. She even had some preachers and their wives as customers. All she needed to know was what the customer wanted along with which store, size and the color it was at. I was really impressed one day by the way she lifted some shoes from a store for me. The one thing that I really liked about her was that she didn't drink alcohol or use any drugs. One of the unique Player's in Shreveport at the time was a guy they called Rectangle. He was called Rectangle because his game was almost square but not quite. His game was tight and he had Shreveport on lock down. Rectangle had the streets in his grip along with the the square world in his pocket. He ran the Sparrow Club and owned about 50 or 60 rent houses. He had many material assets and was a

big player in the cash money world. He had several women that he referred to as his wives. His wives worked jobs and all put their money together in one big pot. They all coexisted in their paradox. He had 3 main wives and a bunch of other women vying to jump on board his train. He dealt with women in the streets but his game was to elevate them to a higher place in life. The name of the game was everybody helping to elevating each other out of poverty. Thus retaining your dignity, culture and soul. He had a great system to combat and escape the White Supremacy system that was established and rooted in the South but headquartered in Shreveport. Shreveport was the last Capital of the Confederacy before the Confederates surrendered to the Yankees. Shreveport never was plundered, seized or invaded by the Yankee Army. When the Yankee Army left out of this region, it was back to business as usual here. The Black people in Shreveport and surrounding areas are also victims of the Juneteenth Holiday. They didn't know they were free from slavery until 2 months after the Civil War had ended. I don't think the many of the Black's in Shreveport got the "Freed from Slavery" memo until Barrack Obama became president. This is an area of generational oppression without remorse or rectification.

Black people from Louisiana have left a mark in America and across the world. They've left an imprint in music, politics, religion, culture, inventing and so on. To survive and live a dignified life under such an oppressive umbrella that Blacks have experienced since arriving to America takes what we call game. . The game of life has rules as does all games. When you're at the bottom up is the direction you want to go. There are many ways routes get to there. I learned there are 3 types of men a Player, a Hustler and a Trick. A Trick is parallel in life to a Pond on the chess board. I always felt a bit of compassion and sorrow for the Tricks / Ponds but game is to leave them right where they are and keep getting your money. Even if you try to wake a Trick/Pond up, they won't believe you anyway. They'll fight you down and say you're lying to keep making the same mistake over and over. Player is

one who uses his wits to maneuver through the system but retains his pride and culture. All Players seem to have a special touch with the ladies. The misinformed think that the word Player means play her but it doesn't. Any Player whose platform is built on misusing women or anyone won't last long in the game of life. Those are the ones who usually end up turning into Preachers where they pimp using the words of God. Real Players are not pimps. Hustlers are a combination of the Trick/ Pond and the Player. Hustlers will work hard to get things but without a solid plan. They don't know what to do with it when they get it. . They usually get tricked out of it by a Player one way or another. Also, Hustlers can become Ponds to the status qua within the system. Ponds/Tricks are those enslaved and blind to the truth of things circulating in their world. They usually taken advantage of and seem to like it.

Tricks/Ponds can can be dangerous when and if they ever detect what's really going on. When used properly they can be very helpful. Just like in the game of chess when your Pond advances to the opposing player's first rank. You then can replace the Pond with a higher ranking piece of your choice. Many of the top Players and Hustlers across America have Louisiana roots and background. In Louisiana you have to get out and get it because ain't nobody giving you nothing in this camp that you want unless it's some food.

During the 70's there were large sums of cash money circulating in Shreveport although many people didn't see it and poverty was amidst. Shreveport was a hub for illegal underground gambling. I learned to play with the Players and hustle with the Hustlers. In other words I learned the game from 2 different angles. The game just goes round and round.

I was in the mall one day with Sara and her crew. She always worked with a team. There was a little boy about 10 years old with his mother shopping for school clothes. I was dressed clean and sharp as a tact. I reminisced back on how my mother would take me shopping for school clothes when I was a kid. The young boy looked admiringly at me all dressed up looking dignified. My mothers words came

into my mind, “ You never know how people get the things they have so don't worry about what people have or envy anyone. People will do all kind of wicked and unrighteous things to get the things they have.” Here I was in this store with this boy looking at me with admiration but I was as down and dirty as they come. I was clean but I felt dirty and a disgraceful. It was a feeling that I never forgot.

As time passed I noticed that biggest concern was trying to get my hair finger waved every day so I could hit the streets dressed to impress. I wanted to be the top young Player in the streets. I had some great Players lacing me up with the game. I could wake up broke in the morning and by the end of the day I would have a stack of money. The best part was that I didn't have to use a gun to rob anybody or burglarize anything for my cash flow. It was all with your conversation. Selling drugs was not a Player's hustle in those days. This was way before crack attacked the Black Community but there were many other negative elements in the streets. I had been involved in several shoot outs with Player haters during the year and a half that I was in Shreveport. Nothing was adding up to what I thought life was really about. At one point I had even tried going to school. I enrolled in Southern University on the Cooper Road but found it difficult to be around those bright eyed bushy tailed students who didn't know the first thing about life. Most of them were my age but not with my experience or understanding. I couldn't find peace and my spirit wasn't satisfied so back home to California I headed. No one knew I was coming home not even my mother. I surprised everyone when I hit the Bay Area. I left Shreveport with a solid education on life down in the trenches from the roots of the Black American experience . The first song I heard when I arrived to the San Francisco Greyhound bus terminal was “Flashlight” by Parliament Funkadelics. A young Asian guy had it blasting on his boombox t the terminal. It was the first time I had heard that song. It was ironic because it fit the vibe of San Francisco with all the flashing lights and everything moving fast around me. Back in the city. The vibes in Shreveport were laid back. . It fit the song “Happy Feeling” by the group Maze.

