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Part 1

A Search for Truth

Chapter 1

The Chase

It was about 10 p.m. on August 18, a warm, dark Saturday night in 1979. We slammed the van doors behind us, running full speed to the entrance of the basement hallway in an apartment complex in Les Ulis, outside of Paris. This 30 to 40-foot hallway had energy-saver light switches on one end and a tiny elevator at the far end. We flew down the hallway like hunted foxes and squeezed into the tiny elevator meant only to carry a few people.

We were two adults and five children. The lights that I switched on as we came in blinked out a few seconds before the elevator door creaked shut. It seemed like forever before it finally closed. We were dripping with anxious sweat from the run. This was the culmination of about an hour-long high-speed car chase through the streets of Paris and out into the suburbs. As the elevator jerked and strained upward towards the floor of our borrowed apartment, I held our three year old in my arms. My wife and I just looked at each other, speechless for a moment, as the events of the last 48 hours gelled in our minds.

Never did it occur to us while we were making plans for this trip over the past six months that anything like this might happen. Who would have guessed that my research would produce such a violent reaction. We had been followed by at least one, and sometimes two, small sports cars. At first the pursuit was slow and secretive but as events escalated during the last five or six hours, they became more visible and threatening.

We had a slow, white Volkswagen van that obviously stood out from the rest of the traffic. Our adversaries had a couple of fast sport cars; one dark blue, one yellow. In the pursuit from the restaurant, the yellow one had sideswiped a parked car and failed to stop after the collision on a one-way street. That's when I realized they were dead serious about this chasing business. We were both going the wrong way. I had headed down that street in the wrong direction hoping to lose them at the next corner. My hope was that a car would come into that street going

in the proper direction after I exited and thereby get between us. It happened just that way and we gained a slight advantage. I made a dash for the Arc of Triumph, the memorial that the American troops marched through after liberating Paris from the Nazis. There was the usual traffic jam around the huge monument as cars and other vehicles swirled around the circle. We became enmeshed in the bunch and thought for a moment we had shaken them. The kids thought this was a great adventure and were hanging over the seats looking out the back window. John, our oldest, was 13. He had helped me conduct the research in the museum. Margie, our daughter and Mom's helper, was 11 and a bit tearful at this point. Frank, 10, and Daniel, 8, thought this was just like "the movies." Joshua, though only 3, still remembers this harrowing event. It made an indelible impression on all of us.

From the Arc, I floored the gas pedal down along a large tree-lined boulevard, hoping to be stopped by a police car. We went through all the red lights but still did not attract a single gendarme. At the edge of Paris we came to a large wooded park where I jumped a curb, making sure there were no pedestrians in sight, and drove headlong into the bushes and trees. I was hoping and praying that I wouldn't smack into a tree or put a large branch through the windshield. After driving into this camouflage for about 50 or 75 feet, I shut off the engine. We all sat in enforced silence for about 15 minutes breathing a temporary sigh of relief. We didn't think we could be seen from the road that twisted through the park. We were counting on them just whizzing by while we laid low in our hiding place. When we thought we were safe, I backed out of the woods with twigs and leaves stuck in various places. Leaving a trail of dirt, sticks and foliage in the road with some attached leaves still flapping in the wind, we made a beeline for the highway to Les Ulis. To my horror, as I glanced at the fuel gauge, I saw the needle on empty. How could we stop for gas now? There didn't seem to be any choice. Either get gas or get stuck, and then maybe a foot race along the highway with five children, and me carrying one of them.

There was no sign of them anywhere when we pulled into the highway gas station. In what seemed like the longest time in history it ever took to fill a quarter of a tank of gas, seven pairs of eyes scanned the terrain for any kind of sports car. The racing car teams at Indy had nothing on us. Still nothing in sight, as we sped away into the night with about ten more miles until home. After only a few miles, one of the boys said with a terrified voice that he spotted them and I floored it again. Only the Lord knows how we made it this time. I purposefully got off the highway a few exits early and zigzagged down streets until we found our way back to the apartment. Now we're at the place where you began to read about this adventure, as we jumped out of the van and ran into the hallway.

As the elevator door slid open with a cranking noise, we were only a few steps from the apartment. It had a double-door entrance. My hands shook as I opened the first door, which had a border of wood with a full-length glass pane in the center. I didn't think that this would be much of an obstacle for them, but

there also was another, stronger door. There was a small foyer between the two doors. In it we had stored our valuable research x-ray machine, before and after our work at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. There was only one other x-ray machine in the world like it. This one had been loaned to me by a doctor from a midwestern university. We quickly passed through the foyer and slammed the second door behind us. The second door, thankfully, was made of solid wood.

After closing the second door behind us and making sure it was double-locked, we felt *somewhat* relieved, because we had no idea what their next move would be. "Quickly," I said, "get every piece of furniture that can be moved and put it up against this door, in case they try to force their way in." We placed everything we could up against that door. There was a big bureau, backed up by a couch and some large living room chairs and a few other things I can't quite remember. It was a formidable barricade. Years later, while seeing the Broadway production of "Les Miserables," I was reminded of this humble barricade in our own French revolution of 1979.

What kind of revolt had I led that provoked this situation? I had been to France a number of times before I was married, serving aboard the USS *Enterprise* (CVAN) 65. I was a U.S. Navy dental officer on this huge aircraft carrier and had participated in two Mediterranean cruises in 18 months. Whenever our crew of 4,000-plus men would descend upon a coastal city there would be justifiable anxiety by the townspeople and no lack of trouble. However, our MPs usually took charge of each brawl or escapade by drunken sailors and eventually peace was restored. But this was different. We were being pursued by some sort of French authority, almost like a CIA or FBI type of operation. What were they after? What kind of a threat could an American family pose to the French national interests?