

## What Is Innocent?

What is innocent? No one in this world is completely innocent, but I am innocent of murder. I am innocent of killing Nick and Josh to protect some drug traffickers. Some fictional international drug cartel the Prosecutor created to make his case. I am a member of The Rainbow Tribe of Living Light, The Rainbow Family and we do not put hits out on people, we do not murder.

My name is John Douglas Grange, "Chewey" to some, JD to others. I am just like you, just like anyone, but for reasons I still don't understand, my friends were lead into something that caused them to help murder two men and point the finger at me.

I have always prided myself as being the "good guy", the one most often described as a teddy bear by everyone, whether they knew me or not. I was the first person to chip in to help, the first to break up an argument, the first to offer a shoulder.

I grew up with what I needed, but nothing more. We shopped at second hand stores and wore ten-dollar shoes. My parents divorced when I was two and Dad took custody of my six-year-old sister Lori and I. Christmas and summers were spent with Mom and her boyfriend Earl. As far as childhoods go it was good, it was all I knew.

At ten years old Dad lost his job at Weyerhaeuser and I went to live with Mom full time. Lori had made the transition two years before. It was a different life, a different place. Dad lived in Eugene, OR and Mom lived in the poorest part of Portland, OR. Mom was joining a new church and Earl was moving out. She was going through mid-life changes and I was left to fend for myself. The food and clothes were there, but if I wanted to eat I cooked for myself, if I wanted clean clothes that was up to me. I managed through this part of my life and when I turned eighteen I joined the Army for all of about three months.

The Army and I did not match well, too much structure for someone who made his own choices since the age of ten. I went in to train as a Medic, but basic training only teaches you how to kill. I couldn't take the two mental struggles together and took the incompatible option to exit. Mom had someone offer me a job in construction if I came home, so it made the decision all the more easier.

I joined the working class. Construction was good in the Clinton years. I made plenty of money and slowly bought better tools and better cars. I invested in my work and would often live with my boss's families, either dragging my trailer from home or living in a spare bedroom. Slowly one job or another went by the wayside until I was left searching for something new.

I moved in with a couple girls I knew and fell hard for one. Melanie introduced me to a whole new group of people that were just like me. They worked here and there, but they were about meeting the stranger and loving their strangeness and their sameness, learning their stories. For me it was humanity made human. A Rainbow.

Eventually I was asked by my friend Jeff to help him over the summer grow marijuana at his remote cabin in the woods. He had been laid up all winter with a broken leg and wasn't going to be able to handle it on his

own. I was unattached to anything, had an easy job to let go, and no girl in my life at the time. It was an easy choice for a new experience. I finalized my life in Portland and headed for Northport, WA.

The cabin we were staying in was a huge, three story monster. It was late spring and beautiful. We got busy growing starts from seed and waited to see how many plants we would be able to use. Dad came up a couple of weeks later to buy extra supplies and help get things more situated. I started spending time at our neighbor Dane's. Dane had a hot shower and it was someone else for me to learn about.

The Northport Barter Faire came around and Jeff and I made plans to party it up there. When we got there I spent most of my time with the family that ran the fair. I had met them at previous fairs and they were really good people, Rainbow Family. Jeff ran into a friend of his that had recently been arrested in Seattle, WA and everyone knew he was working with the DEA. I told Jeff he should steer clear of Nick, but Jeff was insisting that Nick was trying to make things right and so I left Jeff to make his own decisions.

By the end of the weekend Jeff had made plans to leave the area with Nick and his friend Josh with the plan that Jeff was going to help Nick flee prosecution from the DEA. I had to make the decision to give up on growing in the woods and return to my life in Portland. I was there to help Jeff and learn in the process. I did not see how I could do this with my limited knowledge and on my own.

Dane borrowed my Bronco that Sunday at the Barter Faire and didn't return until evening. He told me Jeff had decided not to go with Nick and Josh and was still there. When we returned to the cabins Jeff had decided that he was leaving anyway, so I stuck with my decision to return to Portland. I spent the night at Dane's with plans to load my belongings in the morning and go home. We got a late start because we had to track down Jeff who had stayed with his girlfriend Maija. By this time Dane had decided he too was going to travel with Jeff and I to Portland. After dropping Maija off at a friend's, the three of us drove to Portland. I dropped Jeff and Dane off at our friend Rob's house and went to Mom's for a hot meal and a warm bed. Being now jobless with no sure plans, I took up my friend Rob's suggestion to go on Dead Tour with him. It was perfect timing, and I left from Portland the very next weekend. I spent another couple weeks there and then hitched a ride home to Portland.

I quickly found a job through friends working at a home for mentally disabled children. It was perfect for me and very fulfilling, but didn't pay much. I started to sell small amounts of marijuana to old co-workers in construction that I knew were paying an arm and a leg when I could get it really cheap. I was enjoying my city life again, spending most nights at different friend's houses, learning their stories.

In November I was leaving my Mom's early in the morning when I was pulled over and arrested for the murders of Nick and Josh. They had found the bodies in the hills above the cabin Jeff and I lived in. They had been shot in the head, placed in Nick's Bronco and the whole thing set on fire. Jeff and Dane had been involved in their murders and it was the reason they chose to leave Northport. The detectives and DEA got a tip from Jeff's girlfriend, Maija, that Jeff had confessed to her the night Nick and Josh were killed.

They first tracked down Dane who eventually fingered me, telling them I was a hit man and enforcer for the Rainbow Family. When they finally found Jeff in Florida and confronted him with the information Dane had given them, he too fingered me. I was arrested shortly after.

Even though Jeff and Dane have always been consistent in the way Nick and Josh were killed and their bodies disposed, they have never agreed about how I was involved in the murders. They have never told the same story of what I was doing that day. Jeff and Dane were sentenced to one year in an agreement to point the finger at me. I was found guilty and sentenced to 63 years.

I was not there. The physical evidence that was discovered has shown and proven that Jeff and Dane lied about the facts of that day. The Prosecutor admitted, "Did they lie to protect themselves? Yea, probably, but that's human nature."

Innocent? I am innocent of this. It has been thirteen years since I came to prison. Take time to look at the facts of my conviction. Look at the DEA's manipulation to keep Jeff and Dane in their pockets to further their goals, and the way I was cast aside because I had no information that could help them. I was the fall guy for their failed investigation and infiltration of a drug network. Maybe when they look at these things, the public can ask, "What the hell happened here?"

I need you. I need people that can take time to look at who I am. Some of you know me from a time in your living rooms, or a time around your campfires. Please, take time to look closer at the facts to find out more about my story. I am just like you, I am you, and I am innocent.

*John D. Grange, October 2013, AHCC*