

Chapter 1:
The Smackeroo Madman

*My daddy taught me that if you earn your way
It will mean more to ya when you spend it some day
Keep savin' up ya change, never throw it away
Fill ya jar to the top and put it somewhere safe.*

~ My Life in a Jar

From the time I can first remember, my dad called me John Boy. He used to say, “John Boy, Smackeroo Madman, eating out of the garbage can!” I never knew why, but he called me that all the time. I loved my dad. He’s always been my hero.

Momma Smo: My husband’s nickname – which everybody always called him – was *Killer*. My mother and Aunt Margaret were sisters, and my Aunt Margaret married Carl’s Uncle Cecil. His grandparents raised him and his two siblings after their mother died when they were very young. Aunt Margaret and Uncle Cecil were at this gathering and Carl was with them because he happened to be on leave. I got stood up for a date, so Carl offered to drive me home. After that, Carl started showing up every day! We used to go to the Supper Club on Saturday nights to dance with

Aunt Margaret and Uncle Cecil. Carl and his brother Don used to go too. We dated the whole time he was home on leave. He took me to football games, but I didn't know anything about football, so I had to pretend I knew all about it.

When we got married, I found myself on my first airplane ever to Florida. We got married in Jacksonville, and Carl took me to this really nice restaurant. Our table had this curtain around it and musicians were playing instruments. They brought out this HUGE pizza! I'd never had pizza before in my life! I took one bite of it and couldn't eat anymore. Carl on the other hand ate the whole thing! I thought he would die that night!

I was born in San Diego, California at Balboa Hospital. My dad, Chief Carl Avery Smith, was stationed at Imperial Beach. He was a career Navy man and had already served 25 years by the time I was born. I am the unexpected byproduct of a last-minute weekend trip to Vegas. My mom didn't even believe it when she found out she was pregnant because she was almost 40 and my dad was 42.

Momma Smo: It was a shock to say the least when Carl found out I was pregnant with John. At the time, I was an office manager on the Naval Base. I thought I had the flu or was having a nervous breakdown because I just felt awful. I had no earthly idea I was expecting. It had been twenty years since I had last been pregnant with John's older half-sister! When I went to the infirmary on the base, they had me take a pregnancy test right there on the spot. I remember a young girl was sitting in the chair beside me, here I am 37, and they came out and told her she wasn't pregnant. They looked at me and said, "But *you are!*" I looked over at the young girl and said, "The military

screwed up again! You must be pregnant because I'm not! I'm a grandmother!"

Once it sunk in that I was, in fact, pregnant, I went back to the office and called my husband who was out at sea at the time. When I finally got him on the line, I asked him, "Are you sitting down?" He said, "No, why?" I said "Well, I think you better grab you a chair because you're going to be a father." There were a couple seconds of silence, then he dropped the phone!

Sometimes Carl would pick up celebrities from the airport when they flew in for appearances. He even picked up Bob Hope once. He loved to play golf and would take them along with him. A lot of times he would play by himself, so naturally he was on the golf course and unreachable when I went into labor. My girlfriend had to take me to the hospital, and by the time Carl got there, it was late that night. I was in hard labor with John Lee for 48 hours! He was 8 pounds, 8 ounces with a BIG head. When he was coming out, his head got squished during a pause in contractions. Carl joked with everybody that he was going to throw him into a dart board! My husband was quite a joker.

John was into everything! He was in his high chair in the kitchen once. I looked away and when I turned back around, he had those little feet climbing up the refrigerator. Another time I found him in a hallway where I kept all my nice china in a cabinet. He had them all pulled out and was up in the shelf of the cabinet! I went into the bathroom and he'd gotten up on the commode and climbed into the sink – that's the kind of child he was.

When we were stationed in San Diego, we lived on a busy corner. Of course, because my husband was away at sea a lot, I had to do the yard work while taking care of John. I tried everything. I took the playpen out there but that didn't work because he'd climb out. I thought about tying him to a tree but thought I'd get accused of child abuse. I would have to carry him on my hip while I pushed an electric lawnmower and mowed the yard.

After his 26th year in the Navy, my dad retired and we moved back to Bedford County, Tennessee, where both my parents' families had grown up. My dad had some land and wanted to raise me there. Proudly, it's still where I live today with my family.



Carl A Smith Retirement



Good Ole Carl #GOUSA

Momma Smo: It made sense to move back to Tennessee to raise John. Carl missed his younger years, so when he retired, he wanted us to move back. California was a fast-paced life, and we lived close to the border. It was pretty dangerous. We thought it was best to get out of there. I had a really good job and he'd just been promoted to Chief, but in 1980, we decided to pack up the camper on the back of Carl's blue Chevy pickup. It had a queen-sized bed over

the cab and a little dining table that turned into John's bed. We stopped at KOA sites along the way across the country. At one of the campsites, Carl took John swimming for the first time! We made it to Tennessee to our ten-acre farm. Carl had to get all the equipment to keep up with the place and it seems like he rode the tractor nonstop!



Margaret Cecelia Smith Crow
September 11, 1956-October 17, 1980