

Kisher, Colton ~ Hermosa, S Dakota Convention Grounds

Robbed and Rodded in God's Name

You can indeed lose everything you own because of trusting in men who claim to be godly, but are selfish, entitled and self-righteous as they go about happily backing up everything they say or do in the name of God.

My parents, Verdis and Sue Krisher, had that happen to them when I was a child. I was young, but not so young that I didn't understand what was going on.

My four siblings and I grew up on the Hermosa, South Dakota convention grounds. My dad, who was not from South Dakota, bought the land, the house, and built all the rest himself. He only hired his brothers to help build the convention grounds. He owned every detail of it.

To that sweet home is where I, their middle child, came straight from the hospital. There we learned to rope and ride, hunt and fish and just to live the simple life. It was seriously wonderful. Mother home schooled us all. We would work all day and school at night. I had a steady job by the time I was 8 years old. Same for my brothers. We learned to live on anything or nothing, as that's what our parents knew how to do. I professed when I was 14 and was baptized at 16.

I was around 13 when our family ranch (aka Hermosa convention grounds) was ripped away from us. My parents went bankrupt and nobody in the church stuck by them. However, there were workers who left the work over it; friends who left meetings over it; and well, that was the beginning of the end of it for me.

It all began when **Joe Hobbs, the Overseer of South Dakota**, announced his intention to discontinue using the convention meeting tent. Not because it was worn out, but because Joe decided he wanted a new church building constructed for the meetings—some call these "machine sheds." And further, he expected Dad to fully pay for it since it would be on his property!

Joe was insistent—regardless of the preferences or capabilities of my parents, the ones who had painstakingly built the place and worked their butts off (and us kids too!) for 26 years to keep it on the map, make all the improvements, upkeep and host the annual convention.

Dad ran his own cows, sheep, horses, bought bottle calves from the local dairy and fed them up to sell, farmed a few thousand acres using old equipment that he could barely afford, custom farmed a few more thousand acres, and managed 375 head of cattle for another rancher seven miles down the road for \$7 an

hour. He was determined to keep his ranch and his convention grounds intact, while also raising five children. I doubt I'll ever meet a man who could work as hard as my own father and just get by.

When Dad couldn't afford to build this new church building, the workers told him that wasn't good enough. The part that really stuck in Dad's craw was when Joe told him that the new building was to be used for nothing but meetings. So, basically, it was to be a sacred temple.

Dad asked Joe how many stained glass windows he wanted and how tall? (I did get my gift of mouth very honestly!) As you can imagine, that didn't go over very well. Words got very heated after that on the worker's end of things. They called Dad everything but a decent human and informed him that he needed to sell everything and give up his place in the kingdom. Further, with his attitude, he wasn't worthy of owning a convention grounds. Dad kept his peace, chuckled, and said, "Well, that's up to God. Sorry, that's not your call. But I'll do what I can to make it work."

Then, he started a tree farm on the side, (like he had plenty of free time!) raising all sorts of trees and shipping them around the country in the hope it would raise enough money for the new building. It didn't. The workers eventually got upset at his financial incompetence. They then withheld the money they had set aside to help pay taxes and told him he had to sell the ranch to someone who could afford the improvements Joe wanted built.

I don't know the amount of money, but it was enough to break the camel's back. Dad managed to make one more year of convention. The workers found a willing family, the Alinks, to buy it from my parents. They came into our home and inspected it throughout. I helped drive the family around and walked them through and showed them all my favorite parts of the place. We all tried to stay quiet and kind. We all knew already that we were fighting a battle we couldn't win. The workers were making sure of that every chance they had.

That fall we had a farm auction. Dad sold his equipment and most of our goods. A price agreement was struck to sell the place to the Alinks. We were just waiting on the final paperwork. And then suddenly, they backed out and said they couldn't do it! Seems the workers had told them not to!

So, they had waited till we had nothing left—no tools to use, no ammo, no nothing—and then the bank foreclosed and took it from us. Then the Alinks immediately bought it from the bank. That's what Joe and Ira Hobbs, Richard Harbour and Lyle Schober had set up for them. When my father wouldn't (couldn't) bow down to their wishes, they cut him down and out and went on with their plans without us. Of course, the workers blamed my parents.

My parents owned, maintained and hosted a convention ground for 26 years (circa 1986-2012), only to be betrayed by the workers when they could not afford to build a non-essential building. In essence, the workers forced us out of our home and land—all of this was done in the name of God. My parents and our entire family were severely spiritually, emotionally and financially abused. People talked about it when they learned our family was going to be homeless.

I sometimes wish my parents would have been fortunate enough to have made enough on the sale of their property to buy another home, as some convention ground owners have done. But then again, I'm glad they weren't. I'd likely never have seen Montana or met my beautiful wife. I've since learned that some convention ground owners have not been required to pay for buildings constructed solely for convention.

Amazingly, my parents are still steadfast in their belief. *Steadfast* is a word I use to describe my parents to this day. I learned it by listening to my father's prayers. He always prayed, "Please help us to be steadfast." My parents are truly the most steadfast human beings I know—for no reason except the right one.

I often stop and see my parents. I am a carpenter by trade and have a small one-man construction company. I work all over the place, often close to them, even though I live five hours away. They still struggle to even pay their rent. Dad is in his mid-70s now, and mom's body isn't holding up so well—but they still won't let me help—not because they are stubborn, but out of love.

I'm not wealthy. I'm working on 40 things at once and trying to make a decent living, and they know it. I bring them at least one deer a year. Sometimes I can talk dad into hunting with me even though his eyes ain't what they used to be. The good news is, sometimes I can now outshoot that ol' cowboy!

I fully serve my God in my own home in Montana, with my family (another baby boy is due to arrive soon) and my other chosen family. I'm a warrior for those who need me in my community and country, in public and also behind closed doors. I thank my God for giving me the opportunity and the everything to do what I do, and I open my heart for His direction. I am an elected president of the Minute Men who is thankful for the actual open honest relationship and correspondence I'm granted with God.

God bless them. I love my parents beyond words, and I pray every day that my whole family will someday manage to leave the church that treated them so cruelly. I left meetings eight years ago in 2016.

If you believe in God, anything, or nothing, that's your God-given right, my friend. Let us not be led by men again. Any assistance toward my parents receiving justice in this life for what happened to them will be greatly appreciated. This is

not a collection plate—this is a warning and a plea for mankind—don't make this mistake!

Colton Krisher

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