

## RAYMOND

My mother died when I was a young boy, I was 11 years old. When this happened, I decided to run away and join the circus. I just did whatever jobs they would let me do. When I was in the circus, you slept wherever you could. It was very hard. A couple years later, I enrolled in the army and we went overseas. Spent a long time in Korea and thankfully, I didn't ever have to shoot anyone. You wanna hear something funny? This one night in Korea, I was taking my turn guarding and I hear this voice yelling at me from down the way, and I look and it's this kid I played ball with when I was a child. I couldn't believe it. And he recognized me. It sure is a small world, isn't it?

Well anyway, my wife died in 2022, she was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. I was 92 and when that happened, our kids sold my house and I nearly lost everything. I still had my van and decided to move into it. I was living in the Walmart parking lot in Blue Springs. The hardest thing about living in the van was having to get out and go to Walmart to use the restroom. That was it. Thankfully, I wasn't in there very long, and I was comfortable. It was a good van. I bought a mattress for it. Shoot, I lived a lot worse places in my time. Like I said, I had it a lot harder in the circus and the army. I had to sleep wherever I could and that was no easy job. When I was living in the van, people actually didn't treat me bad, they treated me good. I had plenty of sandwiches from Burger King. I wasn't hurting. But then Brenda and Shannon came and found me on a 94 degree day in June and they temporarily put me in a hotel until they could figure something else out.

My life now? My life now is wonderful. I've got it made. People here are very good to me. I got a little house all by myself. A tiny house, they call it. It's got everything I need. It's got a television so I can watch the Royals play, and I have air conditioning. It's very clean. I keep it very clean. I drive to church and the laundromat once a week. I've been there for two years in June. I'll be 94 in July.

The secret to living a good, long life is to fear God and keep his commandments. That's the whole duty of man. If you do that, you'll do just fine. As a veteran, I would say the best way to repay us is to please just don't forget us. Also, home is where the heart is. Home's the best place to be. Faith and family are the most important things in life. And I guess love is happiness, I don't know. My dream for the future is to go to heaven. To go home, where I'll live forever.