

## CHAPTER 2: MY CHILDHOOD

### BOYS WILL BE BOYS

# Poison Ivy

We lived in the Keagan Road house in the country for a number of years. It was there that I had my first bout with poison ivy. Well, we thought it was poison ivy. Across the street was a huge field of corn. We would play hide and go seek in among the stalks. It was great fun. The day after playing in the corn I broke out with a rash. We thought it was poison ivy. It wasn't. It looked like poison ivy. It itched like poison ivy, but it was much worse.

First they treated it with Calamine Lotion. That was about like caking white mud on my rash. The rash would soon start to ooze a yellow puss. Then whatever the puss touched, the rash spread until it spread all over my body. It got so bad that I was hospitalized with it several summers. I was their guinea pig. They tried soaking me in a purple chemical bath. That didn't help. It got worse. Then they decided what I needed was Aveeno oatmeal baths. I smelled like a breakfast cereal, and it did no good either. These were the days before antihistamines and corticosteroid shots. They finally decided it was weed poisoning, not just poison ivy.



Year after year on into my teens I got this horrible rash that made me feel like a leper. I was covered head to toe with calamine lotion and oozing sores. It usually hit me about July when my parents had their two week vacation. They weren't about to stay home from vacation because of my poison ivy. So they would wrap my arms and legs with gauze to keep the pussy sores from running all over everyone. We would go camping in the northern part of Michigan. It certainly was no fun for me. I looked like Lazarus just coming out of his tomb. Kids on the playground would run away from me. I wanted to run away from me. I itched horribly from head to toe and in between my toes and on all my bodily parts. But I was told not to scratch it because that only spread it. I remember asking God why he allowed this horrible disease to afflict me. Sometimes at night I would pray to die. That's how bad it was.

As a teenager I continued to battle this weed poisoning every year. My mother knew I was hoping to be a missionary. She had asked God for that. Seeing my

misery she asked if I was sure God called me to be a missionary. She said, "If God wants you to be a missionary He is going to have to heal you of this weed poisoning." The rest of the story I will relate in chapter eight.