

# Contents

Introduction	1
1 Back to Chicago	5
2 The JPs	19
3 Jimmy Ford and the Executives	29
4 The Missing Links	39
5 The Big Thing	51
6 Hollywood or Bust	65
7 Making a Name	75
8 CTA	105
9 Chicago	117
10 Caribou Ranch	131
11 New B.Ginnings	141
12 Lyrics and the Blonde	155
13 Losing Terry	163
14 Picking Up the Pieces	171
15 Making Headlines	179

<b>16</b>	Out of the '70s	185
<b>17</b>	Into the '80s	197
<b>18</b>	Peter Goes Solo	209
<b>19</b>	The Hairpiece That Saved My Life	231
<b>20</b>	The Beginning of the End	237
<b>21</b>	Bad Moves	245
<b>22</b>	Evergreen Daze	257
<b>23</b>	Full Circle	269
	Epilogue	279
	Acknowledgments	283
	Credits	285
	Index	287

*Photo galleries start on pages 89 and 217.*

# Introduction

The red and white lights of the ambulance flashed against the trees in the yard, throwing leaf pattern shadows against the face of the house. In each burst of light, I saw the coroner as he exited the front door and carted Terry Kath's body down the walkway. There were police everywhere by then. One of the officers came up and pointed in my direction. He wanted me to move aside to clear a path.

Stepping out of the way, I watched as the coroner passed. Suddenly I found myself fighting off the urge to reach out and stop him from taking Terry away. I wiped at the tears welling up in my eyes, but it made no difference. Everything around me remained blurry and distorted. I looked on as the coroner came to a stop at the back of his van and forcefully swung its rear doors open.

An hour or so after Terry had killed himself, the coroner and paramedics attempted to stuff all six feet and two inches of him into a plastic body bag, only to find out there wasn't enough room. His giant snakeskin boots (size 12) were left sticking out of the end. I couldn't stop staring at them. Over the years, along with his bright grin and happy-go-lucky personality, those cowboy boots had become his trademark.

My mind wandered. I thought back to the first time I had seen Terry's vibrant smile. It was the day I joined Jimmy Ford and the Executives, a band he and Walt Parazaider were already playing in. Despite the fact that I was a sixteen-year-old drummer and they were both more experienced players, the three of us hit it off and were inseparable from then on. On that day, Terry, Walt, and I set out on the ultimate musical journey. We went on to grind it out in Chicago's club circuit in the early days as members of groups like the Missing Links and the Big Thing. Together with our bandmates Jimmy Pankow, Lee Loughnane, Robert Lamm, and Peter Cetera, we eventually picked up and moved from our hometown of Chicago to the West Coast to chase after our dream. We were determined to make a name for ourselves.

And together we did. Our group, Chicago, went on to become one of the best-selling American bands ever.

I remembered the times Terry and I locked eyes onstage after we broke big and opened for rock legends like Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix. I recalled watching him blaze through his guitar solos at festival shows in front of a hundred thousand screaming fans. Finally, I thought back to the last time I had seen Terry. It was weeks earlier at my house for a summer cookout. He was alive, but not well, and more strung out than ever. The coke and booze had taken their toll on his body and mind.

"I'm going to get things under control," Terry had assured me. "If I don't, this stuff is going to kill me."

His words echoed in my head as I realized I would never lock eyes with him onstage again. I would never catch another glimpse of Terry smiling back at me.

Our journey was over.

After they loaded Terry's body, the coroner shifted the van into gear. It soon inched down the driveway and out onto the street. I shuffled after the truck, staring at its flashing lights as they burned white dots into my field of vision. As much as it hurt my eyes, I couldn't bring myself to look away.

*I should have done more, I told myself. We all should have done more.*

Terry deserved a better exit from this life.

There were too many questions and no answers. The only thing certain was that Terry Kath, a guy I had considered my brother and musical soul mate since we were teenagers, was gone forever. The van continued down the block and disappeared around the corner. As soon as the sound of its engine fell away, there was nothing but silence. I stood alone in the driveway, wondering where it had all gone wrong on that dark Los Angeles night.



# 1

## Back to Chicago

**F**rom the time my parents brought me home from Oak Park Hospital in the late summer of 1948, I was a wild child with a constant need for movement. I had a tendency to run toward the flame.

The sound of a fire engine siren was the first thing to catch my ear. Whenever one of the trucks came screaming through our neighborhood of New Little Italy, I waddled out the front door after it as fast as my short legs would take me. My mother was usually able to catch me before I made it to the street, but occasionally I slipped out without her noticing. One time I was found by a Chicago police officer almost a mile away from our house! Needless to say, my parents were horrified.

New Little Italy was an overflow of sorts for Chicago's Little Italy, a twelve-block stretch around Taylor Street. It was a typical Italian neighborhood: the houses were on the small side and packed close together. Families could smell what their neighbors were cooking in the kitchen and hear what they talked about at the dinner table.

My father, John Seraphine, met my mother, Mary, shortly after he returned home from a stint as an MP in the army during World War II. In the summers, my mom and dad took me and my older sister, Rosemary, on trips to beautiful Cedar Lake about an hour and a half outside of Chicago. We went on Wednesdays because it was my father's only day off from his job driving a bread delivery truck. Since it was the middle of the week, our family had the camp mostly to ourselves. We spent the scorching summer afternoons at the beach making sand castles and splashing around in the lake. It was our only escape from the sweltering summer heat. There was also a pavilion nearby with a dance floor where music boomed out of a jukebox throughout the day. I remember how the twelve-bar blues of Bill Haley and the Comets' "Rock Around the Clock" echoed up into the trees and carried out over the water. It was a nice family getaway from the bustling city streets.

My nervous energy drove my parents crazy. I was stubborn as hell. It got so bad they couldn't sit at the picnic table with their friends playing gin rummy for five minutes without me disappearing. They decided the only option left was to wrap a rope around my waist and tie me to a tree in the lakehouse yard. When I was in my playpen, they slid a section of chicken wire over it to make sure I didn't climb out. Their methods might have been a little over the top, but it was the only way they could be sure I wouldn't make a run for it.

Fortunately, there were more than enough family members to help keep an eye on me around our neighborhood. My mother grew up one of twelve kids, and my father had six brothers and sisters. Most of them lived close by, and we all got together regularly at my grandma Filomena's house on the corner of Grand and Narragansett to celebrate every holiday and birthday. With the size of my family, there was no shortage of occasions. The women brought over their best dishes for our huge Italian meals—homemade ravioli, spaghetti and meatballs with marinara, and chicken Vesuvio, which was served right on the bone with potatoes, a Chicago specialty. My mother always cooked up a batch of her famous lasagna, which I could never get enough of. There was a running competition to see who was the best cook, but nobody