



DR RAWSON

UNLIKELY

Not likely to happen, to be
done or be true, improbable.

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HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

Oftentimes, stories are written over a timeline: first, this happens, and then this, and so on.

However, this book is written in a different way. Imagine that you and I are becoming friends. Over coffee, we talk about who we are and share some of our many life experiences. That's how this information is presented.

It's my hope that what you read will inspire you, occasionally draw comparisons with experiences you've had, and, most of all, give you hope. Your life, like my own, is not **UnLikely**. Instead, it is highly likely that you will succeed if you want to.

Prologue

Have you ever told someone a story about something that happened to you or perhaps that you did in your past? Then, those around you suggested, "*You should write a book!*"

That happens more often to people and even some children than you might think. Yet, we don't see it because only some will write a book.

This book, like version one, is a labor of love. I know I could have done better in the first version. I will attempt to correct those mistakes in this version. If you have a copy of the first version of this book, please email replacement@drrowson.com, and I will send this book to

you as a .pdf for FREE with my gratitude for reading what I've written.

Today, I've written six books, plus two, including this one, which is being written simultaneously. In 2022, I also wrote over two hundred and fifty stories for several publications found on Medium.com. As of November of 2023, I'm over three hundred and fifty stories.

We are in the first few days of November 2023, and I've written an additional seventy-plus stories published on Medium. Writing has become my passion.

I write ten to twelve thousand words per week. I am passionate about writing. I'll also read twelve to fifteen stories my fellow writers wrote daily on Medium and several news sources. I'm an editor for the publication Dancing Elephant Press on Medium.

In the past, I had let comments made unduly influence me, and I disliked writing. In high school, my teachers said I would never hold a decent job if I didn't improve my English grades. Note that she was right; I hated working for other people. More on that later.

It's my hope that what you read will inspire you, occasionally draw comparisons with experiences you've had, and, most of all, give you hope. Your life, like my own, is not UnLikely. Instead, it is highly likely that you will succeed if you don't want to.

Special Note

Football taught me many lessons. Here are just a few.

1. We all put our pants on one leg at a time.
2. Victory doesn't just go to those with money.
3. It will always go to those prepared and willing to fight for what they want.
4. When knocked off your feet, get up as quickly as possible and get back in the game.
5. **Never** take who you are, where you are, or what you've achieved for granted.
6. No man is an island. Life is a team sport. Without my wife, I could have never made it.
7. If you trusted your team members to allow them to be in the game, trust their instincts as well.
8. It's not about me but what I can do for and with others.
9. If you're five minutes early, you're already ten minutes late (you should always be 15 minutes early)
10. Never give less than one hundred percent to the task at hand; give all you have. Anything less you or someone you care about will get hurt.

NEVER GIVE UP . . . NEVER!

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1. SETTING THE STAGE FOR FAILURE?

My hands and chin are attached to a T-shaped piece of pipe with several strands of the worst cotton-wrapped wire one can imagine.

When electricity was initially introduced, manufacturers put cotton fiber over the copper wire to protect and insulate the wire. Over time, that cotton disintegrates, leaving the wire bare. This wire had been in its place for many years. Now, the wire was bare, and as a kid, I had no idea what or why it was happening. The bare wire was a disaster waiting to happen. It was waiting for someone like me, without knowledge, to touch it.

Several days before this event, my Dad spent a few hours teaching me how to work with electricity. His goal was to replace all the wire we were using to improve the light in the Turkey, Ducks, Chickens, and Rabbits cages. We raised them for market.

My Dad worked two jobs to support the six of us. The rest fell to me except for preparing the animals for the market (killing and dressing). I wanted to surprise my Dad and use what he had taught me to bring the Rabbit hutches up to snuff with new wire. Well, I ended up nearly electrocuting myself at the same time.

When I climbed the rabbit hutches to arrive on top, there were many more wires than I expected. A network of cotton fiber-wrapped electrical wire ran along the top lip of the

cages in every direction. Although I quickly realized that replacing a few wires would not accomplish much, I decided to climb down. My mistake was relying on the T-shaped fixture to support my weight; that was the **wrong move**. Instead, it had a live 110 volts of current running through it courtesy of a lot of bare wires.

Too late, my hand was now glued to the T and shaking. So I used my six-year-old power of deductive reason to use the other hand to free the first hand. That was a *Mistake*. If that wasn't bad enough, my chin suddenly was drawn to the top of my hands, and now my whole head was abuzz with electricity.

What happened next was a true miracle. My five-year-old Sister was watching in horror. She ran to the house in what might have been the fastest 100-yard dash on record (for a five-year-old) to get to the place where Mom was doing laundry. Mom could see what was going on from the house and rushed another 50 yards to the electrical cut-off. She shut everything off, then she raced over to get me.

I fell like a rock to the ground. I was breathing but not well. Mom helped me walk back to the house. There, for some unexplainable reason, Mom felt the need to draw me a bath, and in I went. The Doctor said it was a mistake to have placed me in water so quickly (I still don't know why). Too late, the damage, if any, would have already been done. It took a few days for the event and the trauma to wear off. All I had left were some scars on my hands. Only one is still evident. Some would say that it was *UnLikely* he would ever be successful at anything with a mistake like that. Well.

Next, was kindergarten. Oh boy! I could make friends. What I didn't know was that it was just as likely I was going to make enemies.

The first day, I was digging holes in the sand when a couple of boys pushed me away and took my sand tools. I went and told the teacher. She said, "What's the matter, little boy? Can't you take care of yourself?" I thought, "Oh, that's what I'm supposed to do." I neglected to mention they were also calling me names like the fat boy and fatty (actually, I was built like a fire hydrant then)."

What happened next surprised even me. I went back and tapped one boy on the shoulder, and when he turned around, I hit him in the stomach. The other boy ran, and the teacher had now decided I shouldn't defend myself and sent me to the Principal's office.

Now, there was a place no kid wanted to go. So the unwritten rule was if you didn't come back with a pencil, it meant the meeting was O.K., but if he gave you a stern "talking to" about whatever you did. It could mean that he yelled at you. However, if you came back with two pencils, you were fine, and the Principal liked you. Well, I felt pretty good about myself. I had TWO pencils.

At a young age, I learned that teachers are not all knowledgeable. So, again, it was *UnLikely* I would succeed at anything other than being bigger than others.

Life lessons like this would come along many times, and each time, it seemed *UnLikely* that I would accomplish much in life, overcome or succeed, given the overwhelming negativity that seemed to surround me.

One of the life lessons I've learned is that it is human nature for people not to be excited about the success or accomplishments of others. Oftentimes, their actions belie their comments. They would have preferred that your success be theirs. It's important to note that not everyone feels this way. Seek out friends and be a friend. Always accept your friends the way they are. DO NOT try to change them.

2. GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

Mom said, “I want you to drive from here to San Diego.” I said to myself, “Really?” Inside my head, I'm thinking how great this will be. Then . . .

Just as I was trying to think this through, Mom received a call from my Grandpa and Grandma Jones. My Mom was an only child, and Grandma wanted her to come home.

Mom agreed to their invitation and Grandpa Jones (a real live train engineer named Casey Jones (just like in the childhood story and song), gave us five first-class tickets to Kansas City, Missouri. They actually lived in Kansas City, Kansas. None of us had ever been on a train. It was our first time.

They gave us a tour of their small three-bedroom home when we arrived. It had a full basement, and they told us, “This is your new home.” We spent a couple of miserable months living in that home in the middle of winter. It didn't take long before we had overstayed our welcome, and we were asked to leave.

It was hard to be upset with their decision to ask us to leave. After all, both of them were in their mid-sixties at the time. There were just too many of us against too few of them.

. . . the snow was coming down. It was the first time I had ever seen snow. I looked on the other side of the train,

and there was no snow. Was this a special kind of train? It could be where we were traveling. The train was fast, and it was 2:30 a.m. We had left Kansas City, Missouri, the day before hurdling towards California on our second trip on a train.

I woke up my mother to witness it; she was also surprised that it was snowing on only one side of the train.

Even as a young child, my Mom depended on me to keep my Brother and two Sisters in tow. Managing them was a difficult and thankless task. The slightest mistake would have painful consequences.

When we arrived, the Santa Fe terminal was starting to wake up. The aroma of coffee was everywhere. People looked excited. That is, everyone but my Mom. We were picked up by a family friend and driven to our Story Book home in La Mirada, California.

My Mom had a temper. On this day, she was particularly edgy. I had no understanding of her pain. But, on the other hand, she probably understood the difficulties that lay ahead. No longer able to live with her Mom and her step-dad, we were now at home again. Only she could begin to guess what lay ahead for her and the four of us.

I couldn't wait to see my friends. We had been in Kansas City, MO, for the past three months, and there was a lot to catch up.

Ever since Mom and Dad decided to split up, life changed dramatically. First, a man moved in that turned out to be our milkman; the initials on his luggage were C.O.P. The only good thing was that Mom let me use Dad's office as my bedroom. It was the best room in the house.

My Dad and Grandfather both collected National Geographic magazines. Each issue featured a map of someplace in the world. My Dad finally had an office and used these maps to wallpaper it. My few furnishings consisted of a small rectangular table, one chair, and my twin bed. Every night I would move my bed to be near a different map.

I remember seeing the exotic names of cities like Singapore, Bangalore, Delhi, Kerala, Goa, New York, London, Paris, Kuala Lumpur, and Sydney, and countries like Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Egypt, South Africa, etc. I asked myself, what would it be like to live there? My favorite places were in India. I vowed that someday, I would find out for myself. At nine years old, I knew I wanted to travel the world.

Before we left our home in La Mirada, California, the fact that we were now poor came crashing in. At school, we were asked to bring foodstuff and canned goods for a poor family. The next day, that same food was on our doorstep. It was a direct realization of a fact. We were poor. I vowed to change that. At the time, it seemed *UnLikely* that I would ever find a way.

Out of the blue, Mom said, "I want you to drive us all from here to San Diego." Again, I thought, "Really?" I thought she had forgotten that idea. I had thought that my chance to do this had come and gone. I was so excited.

We were only home a couple of weeks when Mom announced that we were driving; correction, I was going to drive us to San Diego in the used '52 Buick Convertible she had purchased just before we went back east on our first train ride.

At nine years old, I was already as tall as most of the Teachers in school (5' 7"). We could only hope that the Highway Patrol (C.H.P.) wouldn't pull me over. It took almost five hours to get to our destination.

We had safely arrived.

It was *UnLikely* that our journey would succeed. However, it did. We arrived at our destination without incident. Mom quickly sold the car, and that was all the money we had.

Grandma and Grandpa Viets had two children, Tom and Elly. At the time, both were in their late teens. We all slept in their garage and did everything else in their small three-bedroom home. They introduced me to God and Jesus. They opened up a world of possibilities to me and to our family.

It wasn't long before we had overstayed our welcome [again]. I remember crying and apologizing, but that didn't change anything.

Up the street was an abandoned home. We moved into the garage of that home.

You may not know this, but Italian food, especially pasta, is easy to clean. Microwave ovens didn't exist for everyone in those days.

Every day, I would go around to the restaurant's back to see what had been thrown out the day before. I found lots of pasta, pizza, sausage, and bread on this particular day. I was standing in a sea of galvanized trash cans. Most of them were without lids. Many of them are misshaped. While I had my head down, looking for what I needed, I suddenly heard this voice say . . .

"Why don't you get a job?" he said. He picked a lousy day to surprise me. On this particular Saturday, I had walked more than 5 miles from 40th and El Cajon Boulevard. I went as far as downtown San Diego and back again on both sides of the street. I stopped at each business to ask if they had any work that I could do. Each, in turn, said NO. If they didn't say NO right away, when they found out I was only nine years old, they said NO then.

The man looked like he was upset. He said, "You can't take food from these trash cans anymore." I said, "But, Sir, my family depends on me and this food." Then he said something that would change my life . . . forever.

"Can you wash dishes?" YES, I said. Yes, Sir, I can. He said, *"Fine; you can start right now. Is that O.K. with*

you?" "YES Sir." And, just like that, Mr. Nicolosi started our family on the path to recovery.

I've been privileged to speak to business people, people at risk, and others. I've always told this story. People need to know that one person can make a significant difference in someone's life.

Imagine, for a minute, the sight he saw when he popped his head out of the back door of his Italian restaurant. Here was this skinny kid (not eating a lot will do that to anyone). I was taking food from the trash cans and putting it into a bag. It wasn't until I told him I was nine that he was speechless. Mr. Nicolosi was all of 5 ft 1 inch (that was probably with lifts in loafers), and I was 5 ft 7 inches tall at nine years old.

When he first confronted me, I had spent a few minutes defending my actions by telling him that my Mother, Brother, and two Sisters were living in a garage. We had been homeless for several months.

Again, it was *UnLikely* that this scenario would produce anything positive. But it did. It affects me to this day.

Mr. Nicolosi was married to a saint of a woman. They were so much better together. Their hearts were always in the right place. They always thought of others. His single act of kindness set something in motion that has served me well in my life. He changed the circumstances of our existence. Please don't misunderstand; I worked for everything, but

the perks were two meals a day and food to go home to my family.

For over two and a half years, I went to school until just after 3 p.m. Monday through Friday, and at 4 p.m., I showed up at Nicolosi's to work until midnight except Friday and Saturday. I worked till 2 am on those days. Then, on Sunday, I returned to our garage by 10 p.m. Some might ask, "When did you ever do homework?" The answer was when I had the time. Working came first.

At the time, it never occurred to me that I shouldn't have been working that hard as a kid. However, Mr. and Mrs. Nicolosi had four children, ages 14 to 21. When I started, each of them worked every day. Also, Mr. and Mrs. Nicolosi sat at the same table close to the kitchen; people would come in, grab food to go, and pay their respects to them every day.

I worked hard. While there, my habit of having a half-gallon of milk and a medium sausage and pepperoni pizza daily at lunch helped me grow. In addition, at dinner, I would typically eat two or three-pepper steak (shaved beef) sandwiches on a fresh roll with marinara sauce and a slice of provolone cheese. Add some roasted bell peppers cooked in extra virgin olive oil. All that food helped me grow physically. Over the time I worked there, I went from 5 ft 7 in to 5 ft 10 in and 225 pounds.

Within a few weeks after I started, Mrs. Nicolosi asked, "*What kind of work is your Mom doing?*" I told her she's not. My Mom had never held a job, not even as a teen. She couldn't cook or clean, but that's another story or two for

perhaps another time. I can tell you she had movie-star looks with a beautiful personality. People were attracted to her.

Mrs. Nicolosi said, *"You get her in here. I'll teach her to work."* She was twenty-nine years old at that time. She worked as a waitress there until she passed from cancer at age forty-four.

After a short while, Mr. Nicolosi asked if I wanted to learn to cook. YES, I wanted that. His sons taught me what their Father had taught them. The tradition has been handed down from generation to generation. I was always treated like family.

Just after I started cooking, they had me prepare pizzas the traditional way, rolling dough and then hand tossing it in front of everyone (through the order window). All the orders passed through that same window.

On my mother's first day as a waitress, I yelled from the window, *"Pick up, Mom."* Mr. Nicolosi rose to his feet and ran through the kitchen swinging doors. People couldn't see him, but he was waving me over. He said, *"When you and your Mom work together, she's Alice. She's not your Mom while you're working."* How cool was that?

The restaurant was full from 11 a.m. until closing every day, with few exceptions. Some days, particularly on Friday night, the line was out the door and more than a dozen people deep. Yet, no one seemed to mind.

The restaurant had such an impact on our lives. I stopped working there at age thirteen and a half to play football. My Sister started at fifteen and worked there until she was eighteen. Her daughter worked there from when she was fifteen until she was eighteen. There was a lot of history between our two families; my youngest Sister and I still go there whenever we're in San Diego.

Many people without an education gravitate towards what they know. It would have been easy to continue cooking. It was *UnLikely* that I would do anything other than work for Mr. Nicolosi after graduating from high school. Once again, *UnLikely* never had a chance.

3. A GREAT EDUCATION

At the time, it was awful, but not for the reasons you might think; it was one of the best of all my life lessons.

From the third to the fifth grade, Diane (my Sister who was about a year younger than me and the second of the four D's, DR¹¹, Diane, David, and Dale) and I went to an elementary school five miles from the Mexican border in Castle Park near Chula Vista, California. How lucky can that be? My Sister and I were the only non-Spanish-speaking kids. Our blue eyes and blonde hair betrayed us. It is incredible how much of a foreign language you can learn when your everyday survival depends on it.

There were only a few children besides the teachers who spoke English. However, they wanted nothing to do with us. It took a while to adjust, but we did; we thrived. How *UnLikely* is that?

Next, Jr. High School. Now we're living very near the Italian restaurant. We no longer had to depend on the kindness of others to get to work. We could walk. Our school was all African American students and teachers except me. My Sister started the following year, and then there were two of us. It took longer to make friends and gain acceptance than it did in grade school.

We were ready to move into a one-bedroom apartment that sat equidistant from the school and the restaurant.

Every day, the people I went to school with could see that we were poor, just like them. We didn't have a pot or a window (to throw the pot out of). Everyone said, "You'll always be poor like us. You're just poor white trash."

No matter how hard I resisted that message in my head, it came up repeatedly. However, I knew some things I never shared with them. I knew that other people had made it out of poverty and that I could too. That awful message and the fact that I could go hungry stuck with me for years. "Always be poor" was often like a bad song playing at the right time to fill me with self-doubt. Something else that haunted me until the mid-nineties was hunger. If I allowed myself to be hungry, I would pat my pockets, check my wallet, and recap my bank balance to know for certain that I was hungry by choice. I could buy a meal if I wanted to.

Ah, high school. The school was approximately 55% Jewish, 25% Hispanic, and then the rest of us with ethnicities that we're completely defined. It was in Huntington Park in the eastern part of Los Angeles. Its name was Huntington Park High School. Going to HP gave me privileges I had never thought I could have. The teachers gave me hope. Being in the Honor Society and its President bolstered my confidence.

A biking accident took one of my front teeth when I was 12. I still had a missing tooth at 14 and ½ when I entered high school. My parents bought me a "flipper" for one front tooth, but it broke within minutes of practicing for football. I went through high school without one front tooth.

Let's stop and consider how *UnLikely* it would be for a kid with a wrong message in his head who had previously lived in a bad area to be good or popular in school with one front tooth missing. If we're being honest with one another, it would be highly *UnLikely*.

Brown v. Board of Education changed everything for many schools. The Supreme Court upheld the right to attend any school regardless of the color of your skin. In the '60's we were all getting a lesson in civil rights when lawmakers began to enforce the law.

While many parents and students fought that, I couldn't understand the issue, try as I might. To me, we were people, just people. God had made us all part of the Human Race. I honestly didn't and don't see color or differences. To me, everyone of every color was just that. It made no difference.

My education, unbeknownst or appreciated by me then, included seeing others for who they are. Their integrity and character mattered more to me.

Given the early 60's civil rights movement, it's a wonder any of us made it out alive. There was enough anger, hatred, and frustration for everyone.

Attending Huntington Park High School was like a small mid-west town where everyone knew everyone else and their business. The community was divided into a wealthy section full of magnificent homes dating back to before the turn of the last century; the middle-income families section also had its share of lovely old houses. All

looked good and, for the most part, well maintained. Then, the poor side of town was just over the proverbial (railroad) tracks. These houses were old, poorly built, and bordered (on the south) by the Watts community. In 1965, it was the location of the now-famous Watts riots.

However, the essential thing in high school besides football was girls. As Captain of the Football Team, I could date cheerleaders, those with and without money, or anyone I wanted to date. I never had anyone turn me down. How *UnLikely* is that!

My first wife went to the same school. She was a year behind me. She hated the school. I loved everything about the High School experience. Here's a bit of trivia, the movie Grease used my High School and the one in El Segundo, CA (an exact copy) to shoot the movie. Everything about the school screamed: privilege, good times, and everything positive about living in America in the 50s and 60s.

It would be a few years before I understood why my experience was so good.

I was also President of the Honor Society for three years running. I had two secrets that academically carried me through school. First, I was able to take most of the tests orally. What a big help that was. I could also give the meaning of an event instead of just reciting the date it happened.

It would be a few years before I understood why my experience was so good. The life lesson is this: "*You only get*

in direct proportion to what you put into anything." People who don't give a full measure of themselves daily are probably not enjoying their life. That can change if you want it to.

A few years after high school graduation, I learned that I am dyslexic. However, depending on the material I was reading, I am mild to moderately dyslexic.

I saw myself as someone the girls liked to be around. A lot of them took acting classes in school. I tried. I was not very good at acting. It didn't help that I had difficulty memorizing and putting someone else's words into action. Dr. Durant taught the class and helped me find my voice and presence. He said, *"I believe you would be a much better speaker."* So, I switched to a speech class.

Opportunities to represent the school by speaking at organizations like the Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, and many senior groups were plentiful. It wasn't long before they asked me to speak at their special event or meeting. I began by speaking from my notes, then an outline, and finally, bullet points or off the cuff. It turned out that public speaking is one of my favorite things to do. I've spoken to groups as large as 10,000. Perhaps more if you count the TV and radio audiences.

How likely was it that a kid who was poor and homeless would be able to speak well to others . . . and they would listen? Highly *UnLikely* is the right answer.

One of the most notable things about our town was the Christmas Lane parade that was televised (nationwide).

Every year, the football lettermen drove the convertibles that would be filled with important people. This tradition began more than twenty-five years before my time and lasted well past my high school years and into the future.

The Friday before the Saturday afternoon and night parade, the lettermen would go to the local Buick dealership and pick up brand new cars. We were able to take our best girl out Friday night, and on Saturday, we used the car in the parade. We had to have the cars back by noon on Sunday or sooner.

My car was a beautiful blue 1965 Buick Special with a white interior. I was assigned Congressman Clausen from our area. In the parade, he would sit where the top was folded down behind the rear seat. The Congressman and I were in line to join the parade. There were several checkpoints so they could control the speed of the parade. Unfortunately, I nearly missed a checkpoint. The monitor called out, "**STOP.**"

It was *UnLikely* that this situation would end well. Fortunately for me, the Congressman was sitting in the back seat, trying to stay warm. My new Buick came with all-new power brakes. I was not used to how quickly they would stop.

I stopped on a dime, and the Congressman came flying over the top of me, grabbing onto the top of the windshield. No harm done. He was O.K. He told me not to worry about it. The next day, one of the local newspaper stories showed the Congressman holding onto the windshield. The title of

the article was, "Local Letterman nearly kills our local Congressman." Oops.

I started school at age four. Not because I was smart, but because my birthday falls in mid-September. They allowed it because I would be five very soon after school started.

I turned 16 in 1962. I was a Junior in High School. I started dating that year, and not having a car meant a lot of double dates.

However, my luck changed at Christmas. I had been a better boy than I thought, although it was the year I was made Captain of the Football team. It was the first time someone other than the quarterback or a linebacker held the position.

My step-sister and her two little girls were the first to open their presents. Mentally, I can't wait. My sister was given a large-screen color TV! Her husband had left her, and she was a single Mom. I thought she would never stop crying tears of joy.

The problem, as I looked around, is that there were no more boxes. For my sister, my prankster Dad put a note from him and Mom inside a box, that was inside a box, and so on. The last box couldn't have been more than 4 inches square. The response was immediate.

But where was my gift? That's not fair. Everyone could see my disappointment. Mom said, "Oops, we must have hidden your gift a little too well. I'll tell you what," she said,

we need some whipped cream for dessert later today. Take my car (a 1960 Fiat Spyder Convertible, white with a black interior) and go get that whipping cream for us." I said, "O.K., fantastic." Dad said, "And I will keep looking for your gift." I said, "Great."

When I came back, Dad's 1960 Red with a black top and sunroof, Fiat 500, was sitting right in front of the door to our home.

All at once, everyone yelled out Merry Christmas. Then Dad felt compelled to give me a set of conditions and some restrictions to using the car. I still remember them:

1. DO NOT TAKE THIS CAR ON THE FREEWAY
2. No more than one passenger
3. We suggest you don't eat in the car.

It seems simple enough until one day you find out the student leadership party would be held 45 minutes (via the freeway) away at the teacher's home. The party was great. We left the party at 9 p.m. on a school night. I allowed enough time to drop my buddy off and still make the 10 p.m. school day curfew.

I'm driving 45 mph in a 50 mph lane on the Harbor freeway in Los Angeles. Everyone started to slow down due to an accident up ahead, and just as I looked in the rearview mirror, I saw this massive chrome bumper hit the rear of our car and push us left towards the center chain link fence.

Suddenly, I was traveling faster and headed for the chainlink fence divider in the freeway center.

As the car approached the divider, I quickly turned the steering wheel to the right. Unfortunately, it was too much pressure for the 12-inch go-cart (kidding about that), like wheels, and the car flipped in the air. In fact, it did two flips in the air.

We put on quite a show. Everyone from the accident that had already happened saw everything. We had the police, ambulance, and tow truck all watching.

Inside this capsule (my Fiat) was my friend Bob, who was about 6 ft 4 inches and 275 pounds, and me, 6 ft 3 inches, about 270. We were locked shoulder to shoulder. The car landed on one side. We slid for about 100 feet. The car sliding on its side shaved the door handle almost flat with the door. Then, the vehicle hit something in the roadway and flipped onto the other side, where we skidded again, shaving off the other door handle. Now we're hitting the debris from the other accident, which flips this little car ball onto the sliding sunroof. It gets ripped off, and the support for the sunroof is bent, giving us even less room inside.

Finally, the car stops, and we are directly across from the original accident at Firestone and the Harbor freeway. The windshield had popped out, and the door glass was all gone. We said to each other, "Let's get the hell out of here." Then Bob cried out, "Get this damn thing off me." The car had landed on its top, pinning his wrist under the weight of the car.

When I finally got out, I stood by the center divider surveying the damage I'd done. I knew my Dad was going to be angry with me. I violated rule number one. As I was feeling sorry for myself, a small woman with a long fur coat (she looked very wealthy), said, "There, there, son, it will be all right." I was so mad that I struck the center divider with my fist and tore open the knuckles on my right hand. There weren't even scratches on Bob or me (not counting his wrist and the injuries to my right hand when I hit the fence).

Bob's parents came right away. They gave me one of those parental looks that say, you're in deep trouble. It took my Dad longer to get there. When he arrived, he was more concerned about Bob and me than he was about the car. I thought to myself; he doesn't care that I went on the freeway. It looks like I escaped a lecture and some punishment. It was very *UnLikely* it would be the truth.

The following day, my Mom drove my Dad down to the police impound. Dad later told me, "Your car was sitting in a ball of wreckage on four tires." The car had dents everywhere. The top leaned to the driver's side by at least 30 degrees. All the external lights were broken. Once again, it seemed *UnLikely* to my parents that the car would ever run again.

Surprise, Dad jumped in turned the key and the engine fired right up. The radio also worked. He drove it home.

Over the summer before my Junior year, my Dad had converted half (the long way) of the old one-car garage into a room for use as my private residence.

Dad pulled my car in front of the door, the only entry in and out of my residence. It was precisely thirty inches away from the door. The first question out of me was, "Can we fix it up so I can drive it again?" Dad said, "NO." And just as quickly as the "discussion" had begun, it was over. To me, it seemed highly *UnLikely* I would drive to school again.

The accident happened in the spring of 1963. In March, it was announced that I would be the new President of the Honor Society called the Phoenix Club. Then, in April, the school district announced a Boy's State Competition open to Juniors and Seniors only.

Boys State would look great on my school resume. And it would be fun. It was a seven-day all-expense trip paid for by the school. But here's the catch: you had to develop a proposed bill to improve the quality of life in California. Then, if the counsel Board members approved, you were on your way to the California State Fairgrounds.

My proposed bill would require the state to maintain landscaping, including any trees that were on or within 100 ft of any intersection. This would ensure that a driver could see from 50 feet away that the intersection was clear.

At Boy's State, one day of the week was spent being someone like the Governor, State Controller, etc. About 200

of us were from different schools (only 1 student from each school) at Boy's State.

My parents were so happy when I told them that I had made the cut and that the State Legislature would consider my bill.

I didn't know that my parents had a plan to acknowledge my accomplishments. They would fix my car while I was away. So, here's what they did. First, Dad took a Skill saw to the A and B posts, effectively cutting the entire roof and removing the front window of the body. They put filler putty called Bon-do into as many dents as they could. They also tried to smooth out the other dents. Finally, they painted the car's exterior with matte black spray paint.

My Dad built a windshield frame out of wood and mounted a front window between two pipe pillars. They made a frame to support the window and the top out of galvanized plumbing pipe to act like a roll cage and to mount the front window. They painted that black, too.

My Mom said I had to have a top, so Dad attached a 1" thick piece of plywood to the pipe square roll cage and painted it. . black. Mom thought it needed something more. So she went and bought some red and white striped awning canvas to put on top of the car with a four-inch seam hanging down from the top to give it some closure. She sewed a strip of dangly little white balls on strings to hang from the overhang to make it fancy.

I know it doesn't sound very good, but the car was fully legal and functioning and a one-of-a-kind automobile.

I loved it. I could get two surfboards on the top and strap them down. Inside the car it was like having all the windows down all the time. The school newspaper wrote it up saying that DR had acquired a car with a blown Maytag engine. Others referred to it as the Flintstone mobile. It was a great car for dates, and no one ever turned me down.

That summer was the best. I drove on surface streets from my house to the beach (2 hours each way and getting approximately 50 miles per gallon (that's not a typo; it was a two-cylinder gas engine)) to be at the beach and enjoy my senior summer. At that time, the gas war on prices was solidly in effect. It was possible to get gas for \$.15 cents per gallon. And, they would pump it for you. When the Christmas Lane Parade people called, they asked if I'd put the car in the parade. I did—so much fun.

In the spring of 1964, I was in an accident where the driver behind the car behind me was doing 60 mph and hit my little one-of-a-kind when they hit the car behind me. They struck me, hard and it moved the rear engine into the back seat; I broke off all the pedals and wound up with a detached steering wheel in my hand. The insurance company gave me enough money to pay cash for a black 51 Chevy.

That's the car I had when I graduated from High School and started my first job in downtown Los Angeles.

4. THE MILITARY AND THE LAST LAUGH

I can't pay that much! I said, "Well, you're the one that had the accident. No one ask you to plow into the back of an ugly green '58 Chevy Biscayne with your beautiful red with a black interior '60 Fiat Spyder Convertible sports car. Maybe, if you hadn't looked down at your girlfriend's legs, you would have looked up in time to stop." Dad was right. Now, it was up to me to solve the problem.

When I graduated from High School, I had three scholarship offers. Claremont Men's College for football and soccer. "What did you say . . . soccer?" I asked, "What's soccer?" He said, "Don't worry about it, it will just keep you in shape." Are you kidding me? I didn't even know what soccer was at the time. However, it was FREE room and board and tuition at a fairly prestigious school. One of the guys that graduated the year before me was on a football scholarship at this school. He and I had played together. His younger brother graduated with me.

Scholarships came because I was good academically and in sports. Rutgers offered ½ of everything for all four years. I was really hoping to go to Rutgers.

San Jose State also offered me a full scholarship for four years. However, my Dad objected to the school because of its reputation as a party school.

So, the coach at Claremont sent me to discuss finances with the scholarship department. This was a really sad and short discussion.

Growing up, my Dad always told me we don't discuss our finances with anyone outside the family. He said that his Father and grandfather felt the same way. So when the Claremont counselor asked for a family financial statement, I knew it was over before it began. I wasn't going to college.

Years later, after my Dad passed, I asked my Mom (step-mom) about that policy. She said, "Oh, for college, your Dad and I would have made an exception." In my head, I said, Really, because I did what I thought was the right thing and what I had been taught, I lost my only shot at a college degree. At least that's what I thought at the time.

Vietnam was a huge deal in 1965. The buildup was going on and they needed more and more people.

My Father fought in WWII; my grandfather fought in WWI; my great-grandfather fought in the Civil War as a young boy. Going back further, a Rawson fought in every major campaign or war that America or the colonies had ever been in, including the Revolutionary War. They all lived. Like so many men who served in WWII, my father would never discuss what he had done or witnessed. All I knew about my Father's service was that he was a machinist mate and that his ship arrived in Pearl Harbor approximately 12 hours after Pearl Harbor was bombed. He served his entire enlistment (until the war was over) working on ships at Pearl Harbor.

I once saw the only souvenir my Dad had sent to my grandmother. At the time, she was President of the

Methodist women's organization in the United States. He sent pictures of the native Hawaiians without shirts on. Men and women. My Dad had a good sense of humor. He knew my grandmother would gasp at what he'd sent home as a souvenir.

I wanted to serve in Vietnam. It would be months after I joined before my request was even considered.

When I joined the Air Force, I had asked for Air Police duty. "No problem," The recruiter said. "With your scores, you'll easily qualify," Said the recruiter. Wrong. I had been given the wrong test and took the one they gave me for administration and technology. I did score high marks.

"Mom and Dad, I have an announcement to make. I'm selling my car and going into the Air Force." At that time I thought I was going to be an air policeman. My parents knew that all I ever wanted to be was an attorney or a policeman. No college, an attorney was out of the question. So, a policeman was absolutely in my future, starting with the Air Force, or so I thought.

I haven't shared that I went into the Air Force on the Buddy Plan. This meant that the three of us would stay together (we were told) while in the Air Force.

There was Dave who played football with me. We were both pulling guards when the team played offense. I also played center linebacker when we played Defense. Dave and I were the two heaviest men on the team our senior year. Dave was 5 ft. 10 in and weighed north of 270.

Then there was Leonard, who ran cross country. He was probably 5 ft 8 inches and 170 pounds (more or less).

When we were processing at the Los Angeles terminal annex, we all had to be poked and prodded and give up a pint of blood. When they came at Dave with the needle, he passed out. They woke him up, and then they showed someone else giving blood. When he saw the blood, he fell like a giant redwood in the forest. Decision: Dave was sent home.

We left Los Angeles, LAX, on a typical Southern California day, 72 degrees and very few clouds in the sky. We arrived in San Antonio at a rainy 47 degrees. As luck would have it, a cold caught me within an hour of being in San Antonio, and I felt awful.

A short bus ride to the base, where we were greeted by our new best friend and drill instructor (DI). He said this was the gospel and his faithful sidekick (assistant). The DI's name was Frank Anderson, a twenty-four-year career airman who joined when it was still the Army Air Corps, and everyone wore Army uniforms with brown shoes. His assistant was Joe Pine. It really didn't matter what their names were; they were **Sargent** to each of us.

The orientation included an overview of the next 8.5 weeks (59.5 days). After which, we loaded onto another bus and were taken to our new home, a stand-alone two-story wooden barracks (building). It had not been used since 1938. We had to clean it (every inch) and buff the floors to a very

high shine. The degree of shine would determine if we would have to clean the building twice. Oh, joy. The DI said if we worked together as a Team under a team leader, it would demonstrate to him the type of men we were.

Our DI asked how many of us played sports. Next, how many of us were Captains of the sport we played? There were two of us. Great, you take half the men upstairs, and Rawson, you'll take the other half downstairs, including the showers for the entire group.

Two buildings made up a flight of men. Each building was a group, and there were four sections per group.

We arrived at 10 a.m. or so, and we worked until 4:30 p.m. (approximately) to clean and polish the building. We only had to clean once. Now, we were further divided into sections (or squads). I was told to be a squad leader. In addition to being responsible for their actions, I would sleep on a bed that didn't have a bunk above me.

It was a rule for fire purposes that the window over the squad leader's bed had to be two feet away from the bed, and the window over that bed had to be open. The nights were cold, and my cold wasn't getting any better.

Every night, the squad picked one person to be on a 4-hour shift guarding the building as we all slept. Well, everyone but me. I spent the night trying to get warm. I'd close the window, and then a rotating barracks guard would open it back up.

After two nights of the window being partially open and then me closing the window, I got very angry. I told the guard that I was sick and if he didn't leave the window closed, I would toss him out of the window.

I entered the Air Force as a 6 ft 3 in, 260-pound recruit. In those days, I still worked out. The only one in better shape was literally Mr. Ohio for 1964. All the men from Ohio lived on the top floor, and those of us from California lived on the first floor.

After repeated warnings, the guard was opening the window [again]. I grabbed the back of his neck at the collar and by his belt and tossed him out of the window into the bushes below the window. His fall was about 5 ft. Then I locked the front door of the building so he couldn't get back in.

Our DI must have been around 5 ft 7 in or so and weighed about 160 on a good day. He reported directly to a young Lieutenant fresh from Officer Candidate School (OCS) who was charged with 4 flights of men.

After a while, the DI, his trusted Assistant, and the Lieutenant appeared, demanding that someone open the door. Someone did. The man I threw out of the window was also with them. They all came over to my bed and woke me up. The DI told me to stand at attention. I complied. The Lieutenant chewed me out, and then the DI added his comments.

I had to apologize and a compromise was reached. The window would only be open 4 inches, and I got to keep my position as squad leader. If anything further happened, I would be dishonorably discharged from the Air Force. In the following weeks, I became a poster boy for decorum and compliance, as was my squad.

While in boot camp, everyone had to take turns at kitchen police (KP) duty. You had to show up at 4 a.m.; by the time the dinner mess was cleaned, it would be 11 or so at night.

We were all sitting in the hall waiting for instructions on that first day. Then we saw the Sergeant for KP come in. He asked if anyone could type. Up went my hand like a rocket. I could type 70 words per minute (thanks to my Dad, who made me take the class in high school). I was told to go back to the barracks and get my dress blues on; I would be responsible for typing the menu for the day and taking money from the few that had to pay. I could go home at 8 pm. It's a sweet deal for me. Thanks, Dad.

About $\frac{3}{4}$ the way through boot camp, we all lined up outside a cinder block one-story building. We were told that once inside, we would meet with a career counselor and they would give us four choices for a career.

While in line, Leonard (my buddy) and I noticed this guy in uniform with bloused fatigues, a blue flight jacket with a white fur collar, and a special hat. He was obviously the poster child for the Air Force. Leonard said, "*Look at that.*" I said, obviously, he's a plant. Don't talk to him.

Leonard couldn't resist. By the time we'd reached the door to go in, Leonard asked that fateful question, "*What do you do?*"

This poster child for the Air Force spoke in a deep, rich tone and said, "*We jump out of airplanes.*" Leonard turned to me and said, "*Did you hear that?*" Yes, I did, I said. Leonard persisted. "*How do you train for that?*" The man said, "*We run 5 miles first thing in the morning and after breakfast, lunch, and dinner.*" Then it happened: Leonard was a cross-country runner in school. He said, "*How do I sign up for that?*" The man said, "*Come with me.*" And, just like that, Leonard was gone. So much for the buddy plan. I didn't see him again until our first High School reunion at ten years!

Me: well, I met with a nice counselor. She told me that I qualified for:

Assistant Drill Instructor - No thanks

Assistant Chaplin - No thanks

Warehouseman - No thanks

Inventory Management Specialist - She said she wasn't sure what they do; it was a very new designation. **Yes, please.**

There would be no Air Police training school for me.

When we finished basic training, we all received a transfer letter to the base where we would receive our technical training. I was instructed to leave for Amarillo

AFB. My DI said, *"You know Rawson, you're one of the luckiest people I know. You're going to love it there. There's a girl behind every tree!"*

Have you ever seen Amarillo? It sets in the middle of the Texas panhandle. There are only a couple of trees in the whole area!

When we left for San Antonio in the mid-70s, we were told to wear our 1505s, a short-sleeved khaki-colored shirt and slacks. In San Antonio, it was 37 degrees and snowing.

The base was always a Strategic Air Command (SAC) base and jet mechanic training school. They had no idea what to do with us. So, their answer was to have everyone march around the Quad (designated by the fact that four three-story buildings were facing the center courtyard with a wide walkway running in front of each building). We would continue to march for over three hours until the training Commander could figure it out. The problem is that we were marching while it was snowing.

Most of us were sick after that experience. I lost my voice for a few days. Several of us were interviewed, and there were eight of us chosen to lead. A special rope identified us. We wore it on our shoulder that was held in place by our epaulets. The yellow rope was over a flight of men (385), and the red rope was the yellow rope's assistant.

There were 4 of us yellow "Ropes" that led a flight. We reported to an enlisted person of our same rank, but he had

ROTC training and two years of college. He wore a black rope.

We were assigned to buildings that hadn't been used since the Korean War. This was when the base also did basic training. The best part of being a Rope was that I didn't have to share a room (normally two men per room) with anyone. It was that my job was to lead, now follow.

It took nearly 6 weeks until they had instructors and equipment in place. We didn't even know what we'd be learning. Everyone referred to us as the supply guys.

Finally, the big day came and we met our instructor and were able to inspect the newest computers from IBM. Yep, we were going to learn how to program and run the IBM 360 computer.

One of the hallmarks of our training was the instructor's comment (repeatedly), "It will be different in the field." He wasn't wrong. Given the fact that we were one of the first classes on this subject, I now know the man was a Prophet.

I was given orders for McCord AFB in Tacoma, WA, into the MATS (Military Air Transport Service).

It was a nice fall day when I arrived at McCord. They assigned two of us to a room. What happened next was part of why I never really saw the Air Force as a career.

Let's put the finances of an E2 in perspective. \$50.00 a month, really, that's what an E2 in the military service was

paid. I lived off base and was married (at the ripe old age of nineteen). So, add \$35.00 for separate rations and \$65.00 for being married. In total, I made \$150.00 per month. In today's money, it would be \$1,300 dollars. Sounds like a lot, it's not. By the time, I paid rent, bought food, paid for transportation and some entertainment, the money was gone and then some. There was just never enough to go around. The only reason we had a crappy car with no insurance was because of my Mom.

My Mom hated my girlfriend. My Dad died of a heart attack at the age of forty-two. So, Mom became my goto person if I needed something extra. She knew that when I was home on leave, I had reconnected with the girl whose legs caused the accident before I went into the Air Force.

My Mom said, "If you don't marry her, I'll give you the money to buy that new Triumph motorcycle you're so crazy about." Who could resist that offer? I took the money and ran.

The money arrived by Western Union a few days later. The Watts riots were going on and ashes were literally falling in the yard of my girlfriend's parents' home in Huntington Park. She was scared.

I told her, "*My Mom had just sent me some money, and I had enough for us to get married.*" That was my elegant proposal. She said yes over the phone, so I sent her a bus ticket to Tacoma, Washington.

On my first day at the base, we were sent to work in a MATS (Military Air Transport Service) parts repair depot. I thought, really, they have computers, great. Well, they didn't and didn't know what I was talking about. It was Friday, and the Airman in Charge (AIC) gave me the keys to the worst-looking truck in the fleet. It was parked around the building in the back. I was told that this is where I would work. He said, *"That truck is now your responsibility. On Monday at 0700 hundred hours, we'll meet for an inspection. You'll stand next to your truck for inspection before the week begins."* I thought the instructor was right; it is very different in the field.

The truck had all of its pieces, and there was no damage. The truck was at least twenty years old or older. Fortunately for me, I used to make extra money washing and detailing cars for people living in our apartment complex when I was a Freshman in High School. I was very good at it.

Using those skills and my ability to work with others, I cleaned up and fixed up the old truck over the weekend. I got new seat covers, washer arms for the split windshield, new tires, and a tune-up from the motor pool. All I had to do was help with the installation. I did so willingly. After that, I washed the undercarriage and detailed the whole truck, even painting the wood undercarriage to perfection. I have to admit, that truck looked great. It was now a "classic."

On Monday, I showed up looking much like the poster child for the Air Force. I was standing at attention next to MY truck. We were reviewed by the Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt. E8). His name was Alexander. He was 6 ft 8 in tall,

weighing more than 300 pounds, and smoked disgusting cigars. He was always smoking or chewing on a cigar. I once told someone it was his pacifier.

The Airman in charge was an E4 and totally full of himself. As the newest team member, I received a really brief welcome. The Sgt. asked me where and when I was assigned the truck. The Airman In Charge (AIC) spoke up. The SMSgt. said, "That's too nice of a truck for him. He found a lesser truck dented everywhere, looked very bad, and said, "Rawson, this is your new truck. Try not to wreck it."

I had just wasted a weekend, and as a reward, I got this piece of crud truck. I complained bitterly to the AIC. His words of wisdom, "It will not go well for you if you want to complain. I suggest you use the truck you were just given."

Angry that was the only word to describe my emotion at the time. In addition, I wouldn't be working with anything that even sounded technology-centric. I would be a parts runner, moving parts from one specialized repair facility to another. I was so angry. What were my chances of getting out of this? It was **HIGHLY UnLikely** that would happen. If my "career" path followed that of others in the unit, I'll be doing this when they discharge me.

Time to focus on something I can control.

I started looking for work. First up, insurance sales. I applied to Mutual of Omaha. They put me through several tests to ensure I was well-suited for the work. Why insurance? With a friend, we did home repairs and

maintenance for a man who had worked for the same insurance company for over thirty-five years. In those days, the residuals for renewal policies were at 100%. Even then, Mitch was a multi-millionaire. He owned more than 25 homes in the Tacoma, Washington area. He was an example of what I could do. Although, as it turned out, it too was *UnLikely*.

Working part-time, I saw myself building an insurance business that I could work at full-time when I was discharged from the Air Force. I waited two weeks for the results of the tests.

Meanwhile, at home, things were worse. Money, it was always about money. So, I kept looking. I'm 19 years old. I saw an advertisement for a new / used car salesman. Perfect, I love cars and could sell them for a lot of money and earn a commission.

The first interview was with the General Sales Manager, whose name was Denny. It was interesting. He said, "We can't give you a company car." I said, "I don't need one (the dealership was only a few blocks away from our apartment)." "There's no proof that you can sell," he said. I said, "*There's is proof. I was homeless as a kid. Do you know what I had to do to convince (think sell) others that I could be so much more than a homeless kid or a lowly Air Force enlisted man?*" He said, "*If the owner likes you, you can start immediately.*"

The dealership sold Rolls Royce, Jaguars, Austin Healey, Saabs, and MGs. The owner said, "*You've never been around*

cars this expensive. How do you know you can sell them?" I said, *"Because I know I can."* He said, **"Welcome, son."**

I received a letter from Mutual of Omaha that same afternoon. It said they couldn't hire me because the test told them, *"I didn't know how to sell."* How likely is it that I would succeed at sales? My first wife said, *"It's **UnLikely** that you'll make a lot of money. If you could make one sale, you'd make a minimum of \$125.00 (\$1,000 today).*

So, I started on the first Monday of the new month. The average salesperson sold five cars a month. There were three other salespeople, and I was the only part-time person. In my first month, I sold four cars. The next month, I sold eight cars. Then it hit me: I needed to go someplace where everyone needed a car but didn't have one.

I knew that men and women coming back to the states typically didn't have a car and just as typically, they had a lot of money in their pockets. I was at McCord AFB, and next door was Ft. Lewis, the largest Army base in the world.

I went over to Ft. Lewis to the office dealing with those men and women returning from the Vietnam war. The men and women who processed returning soldiers were just like me, needing money. I offered them an opportunity to double their pay. I needed to know where the returning officer was staying, their rank, their phone number by their bed, and how much money they would receive.

I gave all the personnel I met with at Ft. Lewis my home phone and my address and asked them to thumbtack a note

to my front door with this information and their name and phone number.

You need to know that no one had an answering machine unless they were employed as such. I told each of them that If I sold the person they referred a car, they would get \$50.00. The program, by any standard was a success. Every afternoon, I would have 15 to 20 or more names tacked to my door. My landlord said, "*You owe me a door.*" I said, "How many do you want?"

Once the plan started working, I would call them, we'd discuss their needs, and then I would go out the twelve miles to pick them up and let them drive my new Jaguar convertible back to the dealership. By the time they arrived at the dealership, they were sold. In my first full month of doing this, I sold more than a couple of salespeople combined. After that, I sold more than all the other salespeople combined.

The owner called me into his office to ask how. I said, "Is it a condition of my employment that I must tell you?" He said, "Well, you've forced my hand; I will give you the Jaguar you choose as a company car. I've already squared it away with our insurance company." I picked a burgundy one with a black top and a saddle interior. It was beautiful. I was selling lots of cars, including Rolls Royce.

The first day I drove my new Jaguar on the base, the guards were ready to salute me as an officer; it was highly *UnLikely* that some lowly E2 would be driving such a nice car. When I drove up in front of the warehouse where I

worked, my sergeant drove up in a 1960 Nash Rambler. He was a six-foot-eight-inch tall man weighing over three hundred pounds. As he unwound out of that small car, he looked at me and said, “You steal that “somebitch” car, boy?” I said, “You know, Sarge, that’s why you’ll always drive a Rambler, and I won’t.” In his loud Texas voice, he said, “Boy, you don’t care if you ever get more rank, do you?” I didn’t answer, but he was right.

At twenty years of age, I was making a minimum of \$2,500 per month (about \$16,500 today), and most months, it was significantly higher. Plus, I was living on the 18th hole of the local golf course in a two-bedroom apartment that cost more per month than he made as a Sergeant. He was right; why would I ever care about making rank?

Once again, it was *UnLikely* that a lowly E2, who was only 20 years old with only a high school diploma, could or would ever have such a nice car or make so much money. Well . . .

As it turned out, Mutual of Omaha was wrong. I not only knew how to sell but how to market a product. They’re a very large company; how could they possibly be wrong? Some would say, It’s highly *UnLikely* they could have made a mistake.

Every day (yes weekends too), I had to deal with SMSgt. Alexander in some form or fashion. Ugh, relentless. Without rank, the man couldn’t have led three men to the bathroom with a sign on his back. Honestly, several of us held the same opinion.

When the new C141 came out, our command and base were first to get the newest. We'd been dealing with propeller-driven planes built during the Korean War. It was a big deal to watch this jet plane land.

Later that day, it was determined that the plane needed a retrofit and repair. They must have either had the part with them, or it had been shipped to the base in advance of the plane landing at our base.

A team of two men with welding equipment went in, and within minutes, those two men came out with their shoes on fire. They had neglected to ground the plane before working on it. The plane literally sat right there and melted in place. It looked like one of the paper planes we once set on fire with firecrackers when I was a kid.

The night this happened, it rained. It was a soaker. In the middle of the night I got a call from the flight line. They verified my name and my military driver's license. "Yep, you're the right, Rawson," the voice on the phone said. "What's the issue," I said. "We have a forklift large enough to lift an aircraft. We have an aircraft that went off the runway. It needs to be put back on the runway, he said. I said, "Are you kidding me? I haven't had that kind of training." The voice on the phone said, "You're the only one on the base, at this time, licensed to drive that forklift. Get your A@& down here. This needs to be done now."

When I arrived, they verified my license and then introduced me to the vehicle I had to drive; it was at least

two stories high, and its only resemblance to a regular forklift was the two forks in front of the vehicle.

Fortunately, the cab was completely enclosed because a typical Washington heavy rain was coming down all night. The ground crew and I were on radios on a “reserved” channel for emergencies. This was definitely an emergency. It was the middle of the following day when we finally got the plane back on the runway. How *UnLikely* is it that I would even know where to begin with a vehicle like this? Very.

When the C-141 burned to the ground, the Air Force base received an investigative team from the AIG office that was sent to inspect the operation of the whole base, including its leadership. That took them a week. The blame was ultimately and squarely fixed on the two mechanics that failed to do what every mechanic knows. You must first ground a plane before doing ANY work on it.

Meanwhile, the Base Commander showed up at our dealership. Everyone instantly referred him and his wife to me. We sat down and discussed their objectives and why they wanted a new luxury car. We discussed the Jaguar sedan and the Rolls Royce new Silver Saloon model. We had one Rolls Royce in stock and a couple of others at the docks in Seattle. Among the ones in Seattle was one in the color of their choice, black.

My meeting with them took up an afternoon and part of the evening on a weekday. They were a great couple. He was a two-star General who was nearing retirement. He had

served in WWII in Europe and the Pacific. He was promoted to full-bird Colonel during the Korean War. He had also been a pilot during WWII and had his own plane.

The sale warranted a \$975.00 commission (roughly \$7,000 in today's dollars).

After all the paperwork was complete and all the signatures were correct and approved, I decided to give full disclosure to the General.

I said, "General, I actually work for you." "How so," he said. "I'm an E2 that was trained in proper management of supplies and those items that are Due In From Maintenance (DIFM)." The General said, "**How would you like to work for me?**" I must have hesitated because he said, "**You know, I'm not really asking.**" I said, "General, how can I be helpful?" He said, "Enjoy your weekend and report to my office at 0700 hrs on Monday." With that, I had successfully sold a car and earned a great commission, and even if the General had me sweeping floors, I wouldn't have to report to the SMSgt that had made my life miserable.

At 0645 hrs, I stood outside his office looking as good as anyone can in fatigues. I saluted, and we went into his office. He explained that the AIG (Air Force Inspector General) was pretty hard on him because the property of one command was mixed in with the other command on the base.

After his explanation, he asked me if I had the authority to solve the problem. "I don't." Then he said, "*Do you have a plan to solve this problem? If so, tell me.*" We spent a couple of

hours together. He called his aid in and asked that he process the paperwork to make me and E4. I was already a five-level proficient (that would serve me all the way to E6 if I decided to stay in the Air Force).

And Now, **The Last Laugh**

The general liked my plan. All of the supply chain is run by NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers). The largest facility was the one where I had been working. He offered a little advice and gave me ammunition and authority to get the job done.

My first stop, SMSgt Alexander. He acknowledged me when I walked in and said, *"You're late."* I responded, Sarge, I no longer work for you. Further, I have some things that you need to do over the next couple of weeks."

He said, *"Hey, who the hell do you think you are? You can't tell me what to do."* I said, "You're right, normally, but my orders that I'm now relaying to you come from a higher authority." He said, *"On whose authority?"* I said, "I thought you might say that. Please call this number (It was a direct line to the Generals Aid.)" He did, and just as quickly, he hung up the phone.

I said, *"Sarge, here's what needs to be done by a week from this Friday. If you need me to, I'll go and explain it to SSgt. Fornel (his right-hand man)."* He said, *"That won't be necessary."*

It took me three months to get everything in good shape and six months to have all the facilities running smoothly.

You have to admit; it's pretty *UnLikely* that a kid with my background and education (at the time) would ever have a chance to do what I was able to, thanks to the General. One month later, I was discharged on a hardship basis because I supported my Brother and wife, and my Sister was supposed to follow.

Even before I was discharged from the Air Force, my best friend, Ray Revels, and I decided to go into business together. Ray was a damn good diesel mechanic, and we would start a trucking company.

Of course, between us, we didn't have enough savings. So, we went to the Small Business Administration to get a loan. Ray had picked out a Mack truck with everything but the kitchen sink.

When we walked in to talk about getting a loan, the man said, "The two of you are together?" "Yes," we said." He said, "Absolutely, not a problem. It will take about 30 days for all the approvals. Does that work for you guys?" I thought, heck yeah, we weren't even sure we could get a loan. In harmony, we said, "Yes." After a couple of weeks of going through the process, they told us we were being actively considered for a salt and pepper loan, and they had a quota that we would help them fulfill.

If you've read this book, you know I don't care about color. I care about character and integrity. Ray had that in aces. The only downside of the whole business was he wanted us to relocate to Ohio. As it turned out, it was a deal

breaker for my wife. She had already been away from her family too long. She hadn't seen her little Sister in over a year.

That ended that business opportunity for me. Ray went on to own a large trucking company.

My Mother passed away two months before I was discharged. She died of Cancer.

My Mother was 5 ft 10 in and probably weighed 150 to 160 pounds. She weighed less than 100 when she died, didn't know any of us, and was curled up in a fetal position.

My Brother Dave was a hippie. He had long hair and fit right in. I was Mr. Square. We clashed a lot. After six months, Dave took off, and it was a few months before we heard from him. He told me he was married to Carol, and she was an award-winning motorcycle racer. What? "O.K.," I said, "I hope you're happy." It would be 10 years before I would see him again.

5. ADVENTURES

My wife's parents had agreed to let us stay at their place. There were three of us now. Our first son was born; his name is Steve. Her Dad decided he would be my Dad since my own had died while I was in the Air Force. So, daily, he would offer up suggestions:

A Roofer, fireman, electrician, machinist, and so much more were discussed for my future, as though I didn't know what I wanted.

I wanted to return to work for the plumbing company I had worked for before entering the Air Force. They offered a raise and hard cash if I didn't go into the Air Force.

When I called to speak with the owner, I found that his son Ron was now General Manager of the company, and his Dad had two other companies he was running. He told me they could possibly employ me after moving from downtown Los Angeles to Pico Rivera. They had a whole warehouse to set up. I said, "Thank you for bringing that up. My job in the Air Force was to set up supply bases and warehouses." He said, "Let's talk."

I had no way of knowing that this conversation would change my life. What happened next only happens to others, right?

Dear Reader,

I hope you'll find interesting stories and antidotes from the beginning of the next chapter to the end of this book.

I've been fortunate enough to travel since I was 21, when I started this journey. Unfortunately, no one ever traveled with me. Writing this book gives me the chance to share my experiences with you.

Grab something light to eat. Then, hold on because here we go.

Five, Four, Three, Two, One . . .

6. MY JOURNEY AS AN ENTREPRENEUR

Upon returning from active duty in the Air Force, I applied to ELMCO (Earl L Morris Company), where I worked fresh out of high school until I entered the service. They didn't want to hire me, but I persisted. I finally convinced Ron Morris to rehire me. We started with a warehouse full of pallets, boxes, and large pieces everywhere. I organized their warehouse in record time, and they thought I'd be happy being its new warehouse foreman when it was complete.

I wanted to be a sales engineer. I wanted to call on Architects and Engineers. At twenty-one years of age, I was too young and too inexperienced (they said). I gave them my two weeks' notice.

The office manager interviewed me. He was a sharp-dressed man in his thirties. He said, "I want to train you for inside sales." It was a good compromise. . . for now. So I worked at doing the same thing every day for one year.

Again, I went to the General Manager and asked to be an outside salesman. I was so young. He said NO, very matter of fact. I gave my two weeks notice. It was his father that I worked for before going into the Air Force. His Father offered to give me a sizable bonus if I didn't enter the Air Force. He also promised that a job would always be waiting for me at ELMCO.

Ron Morris, the General Manager, relented, and just like that, I was an outside salesman with my own territory. Hoping to break me, they gave me downtown Los Angeles as a territory. I thrived.

Master Plumbers in Los Angeles, Orange, and San Bernardino counties made \$10 to \$12 per hour. They went on strike and asked for **\$20 per hour**. It took them a year of being on strike to get it. A lot of plumbing companies and suppliers went broke.

ELMCO needed to cut back. The General Manager called all the salesmen in for an interview. His primary question was, *“Where do you see yourself in five years.”* For me, the answer was easy. I said, “I want to be doing your job.” I was still young; the next youngest salesman was forty-one and had been with the company for over ten years.

“You’re fired,” he said. “You can keep the car for 30 days to help you find a new job.” It took two hours to find a better job. I went straight to the overhead lifting company that was willing to hire me every time I gave notice at ELMCO. I had two weeks until I had to report.

Mr. Morris called me personally. He said, “What are you going to do?” I said, “Well, I don’t have much saved, and honestly, I rather stay in plumbing. It’s what I know.” He said, “C’mon over by my office in the morning, say 9 am? I have some people I want you to meet.”

The next morning I showed up, dressed up and ready for whatever was about to happen. Mr. Morris said, “We’ve

watched you become the number one salesperson at ELMCO with very little training. I won't force my son to work with you at ELMCO. Instead, I've asked you and the gentlemen around you and, in a minute, Mr. Smith by speakerphone, to join me to discuss an idea that I have."

"Hello, this is J.R. Smith," the voice said. J.R. Smith was the sole owner of the Smith plumbing products. At the time, Smith, Josam, and Zurn were in that order.

The voice said, "Earl, nice to hear from you. You said you had a proposition. I'm ready. Let's talk about it." At that point, Mr. Morris sang my praises in his introduction to Mr. Smith and everyone in the conference room.

He went on, "Our company needs representation in the same three states as you, Mr. Smith, and every one of the men standing in my office today. So I propose that we give Mr. Rawson his choice of one of three states and help him set up a new business in the state of his choice. We'll give him two years of subsidy, or sooner, to make a profit and pay us back for underwriting his business." I was stunned. They went on to announce the three states. All I heard was, "Snow, snow, and sun in Florida." I went with Florida.

Mr. Smith said, "I never do business with anyone without knowing the cut of their jib. Mr. Rawson, can you be at my Piscataway, New Jersey home on Saturday?" I said, "Sir, it would be my pleasure to do so." And, with that, Mr. Smith hung up.

Ten manufacturers were represented in that room. They were all products I had represented at ELMCO. That is, all except for one. The exception was a brand-new company. It was something called PVC pipe. If I agreed to their terms, I would be the first stocking manufacturer's representative of PVC pipe in the country. I agreed to all of it (of course).

I didn't explain why I wanted Florida (besides the sun) to anyone and wouldn't until all the paperwork had been signed and only if what would become my biggest customer. It was unbeknown to everyone in that room that I had signed a non-disclosure agreement with WED Enterprises. They were going to build a new theme park called Disney World in a place called Orlando, Florida. While with ELMCO, I had already convinced their engineers to go with ELMCO and J.R. Smith products. They agreed and wrote the project specifications around their products.

I went to see Mr. Smith in New Jersey. It was my first time flying for business and my first time in New Jersey. Mr. and Mrs. Smith treated me very well. The two of them and their servants lived in a very large and luxurious home. Over the weekend and on Monday, I toured the plant, and Mr. Smith had the documents ready for me to sign. The Agreement laid out compensation to support the business, personal compensation, commission, and a strict timetable to accomplish what would become Rawson Company at Mr. Smith's request.

I flew back to California with my first business in my pocket. After being fired, it was *UnLikely* that I would

succeed at much of anything. But then, the next day, Mr. Morris called me. The rest, as they say, is history.

I went on to get signed commitments to sell underground and in-wall plumbing to Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

I also pioneered the use of PVC pipe in-ground and in walls within the state of Florida. Within the first year, I built a very high multiple and sold my business to come back to California. I had also signed a non-compete with ELMCO before I left for Florida. So I couldn't go back to California and work in any business that competed with anything ELMCO was doing.

While in Florida, my youngest Sister had come to live with us. She was 14. So, our little family was my wife and four-year-old son, my Sister, and me.

I could feel the stress of not knowing what to say or do with my Sister. But, religiously, she was excited about the journey we would take as a family.

It turned out that a man named Murray Rawson was a distant cousin, and he was representing the Mormon Church in the state of Florida at the same time we were in Florida. One day, we found out we were related, and he wanted to see me at the Orlando Mission, where his home was at that time. Murray was one of the most spiritual men I have ever met. So I tried to emulate him.

He said, "DR, you and your wife are not equipped to handle all your Sister's needs. I doubt that unless something big happens, you'll have the money to send her to college. Let me be straight with you. I've become very wealthy in the last couple of years, and I would like to raise your Sister as my own daughter. I'll have my best friend and neighbor in Orem, Utah see to her day-to-day raising until I return. She will be loved and cared for. I'll pay for it all, whatever it takes."

Honestly, I broke down and cried. Is there any way I could offer my Sister this wonderful life? No. I said to myself. I said, "Murray, this is a very generous offer. I want my Sister to have a say in this before I commit to you. Would that be all right with you?" Of course, he said.

He went on to say, "DR, you've taken a lot on and in good faith. You can succeed in ways you can't begin to imagine. I want to help you achieve the success you deserve. I'd like to have a prayer where we can ask our heavenly Father for his help. I'll ask on your behalf."

We held hands, and he began to pray. Honestly, I felt like I had a weight removed from my being. Then he said something so Prophetic: "As I was praying, I had a mental image of you leading those that count on you. I'm confident you'll always be a spiritual and business leader your whole life."

I left that day from Murray's home speechless. That night, I discussed it with my Sister, who was a bit apprehensive. In the two years since my Mother passed

away, she lived in three different places. Prayer helped make the decision clearer and more palatable. While living with your big Brother might seem like the best option, it wasn't. Neither my wife nor I had the knowledge or experience to make a girl her age feel as special as she was and is.

She completed high school, attended college, and served on a mission for the Mormon church in Sydney, Australia. Upon her return, she married the love of her life, Rick Hiatt, and they have five grown children. She is a woman that anyone would be proud to call their Sister.

I could sell the business easily, and we moved back to California; I went to work for the overhead lifting company in Los Angeles. A small portion of the money I had made allowed me to buy a small two-bedroom home in Monterey Park, California.

7. OVERHEAD LIFTING

The company sold overhead lifting equipment, including hoists, cranes, slings, push-pull devices, truck tie-downs, etc. The owner was a man that had never sold industrial equipment in his life. He was a retired stockbroker from New York. He now lived in Palm Springs and spent three days a week running the company in Vernon, CA. Every week he would leave Palm Springs and drive into Beverly Hills, where he also had a home.

When I joined the company, I did so as an outside salesperson with Los Angeles as my territory. Most of our

products were for manufacturers, steel, and trucking companies. Marketing was defined for me; "Looking for business is easy; just look for smokestacks, and there it is." Not exactly scientific.

I pulled a report from the company's computer system that told me everything I needed to know about the company. They were wrong. The best way to increase our business was to find customers like we already had and improve our position with the one's we have. That was the quickest and most profitable.

I began doing so. One of the companies we represented was Bethlehem Steel. We sold their wire rope for elevators, hoists, and cranes. Bethlehem Steel was also the one account that the company owner called on every three months, like clockwork. He would take the purchasing agent to lunch.

I approached and asked Jim, the owner, if I could try my hand at the Bethlehem account. The first time I asked, he said NO. The second time I asked, he said NO. Finally, I said, "Jim, are you up for a little wager?" "What did you have in mind?" I said, "I'll bet I can get an order for \$1,000 or more in a month from Bethlehem Steel." Very quickly, he said, "I'll take that bet. That's what I call a sucker's bet. Your ego will get crushed; they're tough."

The following Monday, I went to see the plant manager unannounced. I had asked around and found that he had an open-door policy for vendors but they must wait until he is ready. Fair enough.

I arrived about 10 am in the morning. I wanted to give him time to clear his desk and see other drop-ins. His Secretary (Personal Assistants didn't exist then) went in and said, "I have a man here from the company that buys our wire rope locally." I hear him say, "Sure, send him in."

As I walked in, his head was down, finishing up something. When he looked up, I was about 4 feet from his desk. He jumped like he'd seen a ghost. Then, he said, "May I ask your name?" I said, "DR Rawson. Maybe you knew my Father, EJ? He was a time and motion study engineer at this plant."

He started crying and sat back down. He said, "I'm sorry for the tears, but your Dad was my best friend. I was devastated when he passed. Not being allowed to attend the funeral made it even worse. zero closure."

"You scared me a bit; I thought I saw a ghost when I saw you. What's your name again?" "DR Sir," I said. "It's DR. I'm his oldest son. I was in the Air Force when my Dad died. My Dad was great in my eyes." "Mine too." He said.

"DR, how can I help you," he said. I carefully and mindfully said, "Our company buys your wire rope for cranes, hoists, elevators, etc., from your wire rope plant on the East Coast. I know you made or did make rebar at this location. At least you did when Dad was alive. I've toured the plant."

“You’re 100% correct,” he said. I said. Two blocks away from you in Vernon (CA), our company, sits and has been there for more than 25 years. We supply other steel companies outside Los Angeles as well. Are you aware that OSHA is coming in about six months?” He looked a little panicked when he said, “I’m not looking forward to it. I have no idea if we comply or not.”

Stepping in I said, “Well, I can help you there. You have a large amount of equipment that we make or sell. Would it be OK with you if I surveyed the whole plant today? Then, tomorrow, I can come back to discuss the details.” He actually looked a little relieved when he said, “That would be great. Let me get the plant operating engineer up here.” And then he asked his Secretary to get the Safety Engineer and ask him to catch up with us. He added to me, “By the way, these men knew your Dad, hell, we all did. It was great to meet you. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

I called and had some shop guys come from our place to help me. It took us all day. It took me from 6 p.m. until almost 1 a.m. typing on an old Underwood typewriter to finish up the report. The total was **\$35,000** plus to bring the plant in compliance with our type of equipment. The next day, I showed him the report and said, “If you decide to do this, I’ll be here once a month to ensure there are no problems or failures. That costs nothing except for the repair or replacement as needed.”

He said, “DEAL. Your offering is excellent and works for me. How many of my competitors do you have a client?” Sheepishly, I responded, “None.” He asked, “Do you mind if I help you?” I said, “Would you?” He gave me the names

and phone numbers of five other people. He also said you tell them I sent you. Okay?" I said, "Thank you so very much." He said, "Stop by purchasing, and they'll give you a purchase order number. When will we have our stuff." After a bit, I said, "In about one week to 10 days, depending on our shop load. I'll watch closely for it to be ready. And I'll call you one to two days before we come out and install the equipment if that works for you?"

Jim walked into my office a little after 8 a.m. the following day. "Hey, how did your call on Bethlehem go? They're a tough nut to crack." I said, "It went great, and their first order was a little over **\$35,000**. It looks like I won the bet." I didn't even want to mention the referrals.

7. THE LAW OF CONGRUENCY

About a month after I landed the Bethlehem Steel account, I had lunch with a Casualty Insurance guy. He was always pumping me for information. He had for months. At lunch, I said curiously, "I'm glad I can be helpful to you and your business. How about giving me some referrals?"

Have you ever had a conversation where neither party knew what to say? Well, my friend was having just such an experience with me over lunch. I said, "Listen, I need the business, and if there's something I'm doing that will help you, I'll probably do it if it's legal. However, if it's something I'm not doing or anything, I'm sure it can be fixed." After a silent pause that seemed to last forever. Finally, I said, "Look, this is business. I can take anything you have to say. What is it?" Here is what he said.

"DR, you frankly look like shit. Your hair is over your ears, and you wear polyester, a white belt, and white shoes. You probably think you look hip or cool. You don't look like a businessman at all. You're one of the most knowledgeable people about your products, OSHA, etc., and you're a great idea, man, but I can't take you into any of my accounts. I won't."

In my defense, I had never taken on a role model to figure this out. No one had cared enough to ever tell me how a Businessman should dress.

OK, now it was my turn to speak. I said, "Wow, I think that's the most direct that anyone has ever been with me my

whole life. Thank you. I understand and appreciate you being willing to “set me straight.” You’ve given me a lot to digest. Thank you.” What do you say when someone is nice enough to tell you the truth? Frankly, I was relieved. He didn’t say a single thing that couldn’t be fixed, quickly.

After that lunch, I had a meeting at the Fuller Corp. I arrived fifteen minutes early, as was my habit. I was reading a steel industry magazine, and there was an article about the Chairman of Bethlehem Steel. It included a picture of him from the top of his head to his knees. It used up a fourth of the page. I pondered the image for a few minutes and finally said to myself, if I looked like that, I would make a strong positive impression. I promptly ripped the picture out of the magazine. I had an idea about using the picture to my advantage.

After leaving Fuller in Torrance (CA), I drove downtown Las Angeles. I was looking for a traditional men’s only store. Someone that would understand what I’m looking for. It took a bit of driving, but I found two of them. Here’s what I said:

“See this picture? Now, what would it cost for me to dress like that for business?” At the first shop, the salesman said, “If I have to tell you, you can’t afford to look like this.” Really. I said, “let’s play along, shall we? I need a couple of suits, a . . . ” he began; “At least one double-breasted blue sports coat, 3 or 4 pairs of sport pants, a couple of pair of shoes and at least seven dress shirts.

OK, what's this going to cost me? He said, "Around \$2,000 (in today's dollars, it's about \$14,000) depending on what you approve of wearing." "OK, let's say I agree to do this. Can you alter one suit to pick up tomorrow and the rest of what I'm purchasing in a week (It was presently Friday)?" His response was simple and true, "For a price, anything can be done."

I liked the guy. I said, "Give me an hour, and I'll be back. I did something at the other shop, and his price was **\$1,200**. Clearly, his weren't as good as the other shop (in my mind). I couldn't risk it. I left and went back to the original shop. However, I stopped at the bank first.

I said, "Not everything has to be the most expensive you sell. There must be grades of great, right?" He agreed. I told him that I needed to have the total be something less than \$2,000. He said, "Let's see what we can do."

My first suit was a beautiful blue wool suit, three buttons with a center fly in the back. It was beautifully lined in silk brocade. They took measurements, and when he came to the cuffs on the pant, he asked, "Traditional or modern?" "Traditional", I said.

My next suit was a dark grey with a marvellous hand (feel) to it. Also beautifully lined. We picked out a double-breasted blue blazer with brass buttons. Then we picked more sports pants and another sport coat.

"How do you feel about your shirts?" He asked, "What is traditional?" He said most men of great wealth wear

French cuffs with appropriate cuff links." He said. "Let's see what shirt collar looks best on you." We went with a 3" pointed collar that could take a tie bar under the tie between the two collars. Perfect, we said in unison. I purchased all cotton shirts, six white and one blue.

We went through a similar dance with socks, over-the-calf, and then leather belts that didn't shine.

He said, "Now the tricky bit." I said, "Oh, how so?" I said. "Sir, may I ask, did you go to college and if so, which one?" I answered not yet." Then he said, "Are you comfortable wearing school ties from schools you didn't attend?" "Yes if it's Rutgers or Harvard." I purchased one of each, a bankers tie, several reps, and several club ties. One tie had ducks on it.

I bought a pair of black and burgundy shoes with a cap toe. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of a sport coat that seemed out of character. It was a light tan corduroy, three-button coat with leather buttons, and a silk lining with all various duck images woven into the fabric lining. I had to have it.

OK, time to total all of it up. It came to less than \$1,200. I said, "How could you be that far off?" He said, "I thought I'd let the price tell you the quality that we represent." Well played, I thought.

I left a happy guy. I made it to the cleaners in time to get all the shirts heavily starched. I picked them up on Saturday. Also, on Saturday, I found a traditional men's barbershop. I

picked what I wanted from the picture I was still using to identify the best look.

On Monday morning, I wore my new blue suit, white shirt, banker's tie, and black shoes. I timed my entrance so that everyone in the office, including the owner, would see me come in. As I passed by the owner's office, he said, "Hey, get in here. What happened to you? You look like you could have worked at my stock brokerage in New York. What's going on?" I said, "I will tell you all about it, just not now. I have an important meeting at lunch, and I have to prep for the meeting." He said, "OK, let me know how it goes."

It took me about frothy-five minutes to reach the same guy that had been so very direct with me. I pleaded with him to meet me for lunch that day. He objected a few times, too busy, he said, then said, "we just had lunch last Friday," I held fast to my request. Finally, he agreed and scheduled the lunch because I told him I would make it worth his time.

Again, I showed up fifteen minutes early and stood in the corner of the lobby of a very busy restaurant. He arrived and went straight to the Concierge. He said, "Dr. Rawson for two." He had walked right past me to get to the table. I followed him, and after he sat down, I approached from the front, called his name and said, "Thank you for meeting me and for being so direct with me the last time we spoke." He was speechless. He shook my hand and said, "This is a bit of a shock. It was UnLikely that you were going to do something about what we discussed."

My direct question to you is, "Do you have one or two referrals that you can give me right now?" "Yes, I do," he said with a straight face. And at that Moment, a true two sided arrangement benefited both of us.

One lead was for Ducommun Metals & Supply. I knew that would be tough. The other was for Jorgensen Steel. Mr. Jorgensen started the company with scraps of metal and a homemade wagon and would walk up and down the industrial parts of town selling scraps. By the time we met, he owned thirty-five service steel plants and two forges.

True to his word, my friend set a meeting with Mr. Jorgensen and his Board of Directors for two weeks from that Monday at Noon. I would present, and then a lunch would be served in the Executive Lunchroom off the main conference room. It was a few months before I was able to get into Ducommun.

After lunch, Mr. Jorgensen tapped his water glass, and the room went silent. Finally, he said, "I like this young man's approach. I would like him to survey every plant we have and repair or replace what's needed. I believe we can trust this man. Everyone agree?" And, just like that, the cost of my new wardrobe became insignificant.

Looking back, I can now see what I couldn't see then. It would take at least five more years to figure it out. I had used the "Congruency[2]" law to succeed.

However, history says this: it was a success. We were doing around \$100,000 (\$860,000 today) a month in business. When I was made National Sales Manager, they gave me three of the one hundred outstanding shares. So, every three months, I got a dividend worth about the same as my annual salary.

The day finally arrived when Jim was being an ass. I said, "Jim, why don't you sell this place?" He said, "I make a lot of money here." I said, "How many of your twenty-three employees are in the shop and warehouse? Do you know their names?"

Let's start with one of the most visible people, who delivers our goods to every customer and client. What's his name? He's been here more than twenty years. What's his name."

He didn't have any answers. I said, "Did you know that no one that works for you likes you? In fact, it borders on HATE." He said, "Is that the way you feel?" Based on your answers today, I said, "Jim, I'm prepared to move into that camp. Why don't you sell the company?" He thought momentarily and said, "Who would buy it?" I said, "Depending on the price, I might." He said, "You, you wouldn't have enough money no matter the price. How old are you?" I said, "I'm young enough to have already sold a business I started at twenty-one in Florida, a long while before joining you. Why don't you tell me how much you want? Write it down."

His big six-foot-four-inch lean body leaned over, wrote the amount, and handed it to me.

He quickly said, “It will obviously have to be someone else.” I studied the amount and quickly calculated the amounts we were missing because of him and how we’re doing business. I knew I could quickly get my money back.

I said, “Jim, I’ll buy your business under one condition. It would be best if you gathered all your things, especially that five million dollars painting over your desk and the company car I’ll give you, and return to Palm Springs. Never, grace us with your presence, ever.

We were doing more than five times more business in six months than under his watch. I gave the employees thirty percent of the company and divided their share of the profits between every employee.

After a few years, I sold the company to all of its employees as an ESOP (employee stock ownership plan). It was a win-win.

8. A LIFE OF CHOICE

When I was living with my Mother and siblings, my Mother chose to marry a man who would become my Stepdad from hell. Andy was a mailman with a perfect memory. If someone shared a story with him or read it, he could recite it back to you. He was from New York, and he began drinking at an early age. He was in his mid-thirties when I moved back into their home. My mother was eager to have me, as were my siblings. I was anxious to be around them again. I had no idea of what lay ahead for me.

Andy used his photographic memory to catalog every joke that he had ever read or been told, most of them dirty. We could count on demonstrations of his knowledge at dinner, regardless of how inappropriate it was.

At this time in my life, I had to work and returned to work at Nicolosi's. Just one problem: it was in San Diego, and we lived in El Cajon. So, I bought myself a 1938 Chevy two-door. It was on blocks for more than ten years, but the engine was turned over regularly, the tires were neatly stacked, and everything worked. It was dark gray with a mohair split seat in the front, and the gear shift was on the floor. The car cost **\$15.00**, and I had to put gas in it to get back home.

Every day, after school, I would drive the car to San Diego without a license or insurance. Andy was furious; my car ran better and looked better than his.

Violence was prevalent in our home. Most of it I attributed to Andy. He was the bad actor. Over the years, I had neatly and conveniently dismissed my role in family violence. Although I felt as though I had to defend my Mother and my siblings because of Andy, there was still a lot of violence and anger coming from me. Every day my siblings complained about spankings, inappropriate remarks, and unnecessary rules from Andy.

I finally quit working when I realized that the money I gave my Mom would fuel Andy's next alcohol-fueled rage.

One day after school, I drove home, racing my friend in his 1946 Ford Coupe. He lived a few doors down the street but was a Junior in High School. I was in the eighth grade. We raced. I won, and he "dropped his transmission" (meaning his transmission broke). In the last one hundred yards or so, there was an oil patch from his transmission.

Andy arrived home early that fateful day, but Mom was still at Nicolosi's restaurant working her shift. She wouldn't be home for another hour. It was Friday night. My Sister was in 7th grade and planned to go to the movies with her boyfriend. When I walked through the door, the first thing I saw was Andy hitting my Sister and telling her to go and change clothes. My Sister and I were both bigger than Andy by at least three inches. She refused, and his hand was just about ready to reach her again when I grabbed it and punched him in the face, knocking him to the ground.

He got back up and came at me, and my Sister hit him from behind. He staggered and then came towards me. I hit

him as hard as possible, and he went down again. This time I jumped on top of him, hitting him anywhere I could, as fast as I could.

Then it happened. I put my hands around his neck, and to this day, I know my intent was to rid our family of this horrible excuse for a man . . . permanently. It was a frightening scene. The little kids were in tears; my Sister was now trying to get me off and yelling STOP! She was now trying to protect Andy. My Brother Dave was also trying to help, yelling, crying, loud, loud, and louder. That was the scene. My little Brother Dave and a neighbor came running over because my little Sister, Dale, had gone for help.

He was turning blue, and his eyes looked weird. The neighbor and Diane pulled me off. He began yelling and swearing at me as he tried to get back on his feet. Mother arrived at home. She was the arbiter for this fight, but her words were about to determine the new course of my life.

She saw Andy's wounds and comforted him when he said, "Either he goes, or I do!" It felt like the whole world became silent, and all eyes were on me. Andy spoke again to my mother and said, "Well, what's it going to be, him or me?" Another period of defining silence, and my Mother said quietly, "DR, you'll have to leave." I remember turning to the wall next to me and putting my fist right through it.

My Dad and his wife had already asked me to leave previously. I was only with them a few months because I was creating too much stress for my Dad. I couldn't go to

their home. I knew I had some money and a few friends; I could stay with one of them and figure this out.

My Mother was saying you must call your Dad first. So she gave me his number, and I called. I told my side of what had happened. Then I said, "If you don't want me, I can go out alone." Dad said, "Hold on." Through the muffles on the phone, I could hear him pleading my case with his wife. It seemed like forever with my Mother, Andy and the kids all looking at me, waiting to hear what would happen next.

My Dad said, "You can come and live with us. It's crowded (that turned out to be an understatement), but you're welcome here. "What's the address," I said, he told it to me, and I wrote it down. I said, "I'll be there in the next couple of days by bus. I'll call you when I get to the bus depot in that town." My Dad said, "O.K. son, I'll see you then."

I turned and told everyone I was leaving. I needed bus fare and more money. I said, "Do you want to buy my car?" Andy said yes, and Mom said she would give me **\$50.00** for it. SOLD. It would be years before I owned another car. For now, I had a clear way out.

As they say, I took the money and ran. For years my Sister Diane and my Brother Dave never forgave me for leaving. Things only got worse, and Andy drank even more. It would be four years before I found this out or even communicated with Mom and the kids.

I learned that I could be violent. I learned that I had a temper, and most of all, I learned that I could hurt people. I didn't like the feeling. It scared me. I kept it to myself for a long, long time. I only let the violence out when I played football. My temper was another matter.

After a few rocky months, my Dad took me to the pawn store around the corner from where we lived. We talked about family, my temper, and the kind of life I could have if I just learned to control myself. He said, "*You always have a choice, and it's always yours to make.*" He bought me my own tackle box and fishing pole.

My Dad was my fishing buddy. When he passed, I stopped fishing. I haven't been out since.

I had a choice; those words stayed with me. I had a choice, I could (probably in large part) control my life.

What I couldn't control now was living with Dad and his wife with my new step-sister and her three daughters, all in a three-bedroom apartment. I would have to sleep in the same bed with the two eldest children. They were about six and four, as I recall. I remember most vividly that one of them regularly wet the bed. Ugh.

The good news was that we were all happy. No yelling, no fighting, and it turned out my new Sister and her kids were great. I loved having fun with them.

I had moved in with them in the spring of that year; by September, my new Sister had reconciled with her husband,

and they all moved back to Santa Barbara. After that, I would only see them three more times in my life.

Once it was just the three of us, life changed dramatically. Things were easier then; there was more food, and much attention was paid to me. Bonus: I now had my own room. That Christmas, my mother sent me a Christmas present. A transistor radio. It was about 6 inches wide, 3 inches high, and 2 inches deep with a big antenna. I loved having it on under the covers at night. It was the last gift I ever received from my Mother.

Family life was great. Every other weekend, we would take off right after Dad came home and drive to Lake Isabella above Bakersfield in central California. We would fish all day Saturday and then clean freshly caught fish for dinner. Then, Sunday morning, we packed up, and by noon, we left and returned home.

My parents bought a piece of land for \$1,200 and started building a Cabin to use when they went to the lake. Then, as I grew older and had interests and wheels to take me places alone, they would leave me for the weekend—what a mistake (on their part).

You can't see this, but I'm laughing out loud just remembering so many things that happened on the weekends they were gone.

The connection between the three of us was strong. My Dad's wife became Mom to me, and my biological Mom became Mother. That's how I separated them. Mom was

great. She taught me many things like staying organized (she was an accountant) and in addition to a step Sister, she brought a step older Brother named Ron to the relationship. He had a wife and one son. He ran his Father-in-law's Florsheim men's shoe store. I had only seen it twice. He didn't like Mom, and so we didn't talk about him.

The words my Dad gave me while traveling to and from the pawnshop were always with me. However, there was no more violence or, for the most part, anger.

My Dad always worked two jobs. He worked at Bethlehem Steel and always did something else. My Mom was an accountant for a firm that sold meat on the "freezer plan." So we always had steak, roast, chicken, pork, etc. Mom always said that I would keep them broke, trying to feed me if she hadn't worked there. I think she was right.

Meanwhile, everyone remarked at how much my Dad and I looked alike. We also spoke the same way, and our mannerisms were the same. Mom once said it was like living with her husband (my Dad) and his twin (younger) Brother. Funny at the time.

9. HIGH SCHOOL

When I started high school, Judd Blaine became my first friend in school. Later came John Hotzfield. All through high school, I was with one or both of them.

Judd was my spiritual partner. We were on a quest to find out what religion means. We wanted to know how to talk with God. We had questions. I'm now seventy-seven, and after twenty-two years in the ministry, I no longer have those questions.

Judd and I made it our mission to find out everything we could about religion and visit every church in our Huntington Park, California community. Judd's family were Quakers, owning a substantial big old home and a used furniture store. I had been baptized a Methodist, not that I understood the meaning of baptism or much of anything spiritual when I was six months old.

I can tell you two things about staying the night at Judd's home. First, his mother wouldn't tolerate us speaking in the house without using thee and thou and so many other words. It was tough to learn, but it was worth it. The other thing is that okra was on the menu every night at dinner. Fried, stewed, or dry, it was always there, and you must eat everything on your plate that was given to you by his Mom. There are simply NO Words. I still can't eat okra without wanting to throw up. Sorry.

Throughout high school, Judd and I attended one church or another. We would attend for a while, even take a class or two, and then . . . get baptized and move on. The only house of worship we couldn't attend was the Jewish synagogue. Half of our football team was Jewish. Still, It would be several years before I formally took religious training and could attend a synagogue.

I met my first high school girlfriend at the Church of Christ in God non-instrumental. It was the last church that Judd and I attended. We'd been to everything else. Because of my girlfriend and her parents, I spent two of my high school years at that church.

Once I was in a "relationship" with God, my life began to settle down, and I had a greater focus on what I wanted to accomplish.

I would have married that girl right out of high school, but her Dad had revealed to me what I would do. He owned three auto parts stores. His son ran one, he ran one, and I would run the other. Then, after five years, we'd all move to Arkansas, where he and his wife owned a small mountain. They would live on top, and his son and daughter would live at the base along the driveway on the road up.

Seriously, you've got to be kidding. I haven't even finished high school, and he wants to plan my life. After that plan was revealed, I broke off the relationship.

Next was a beautiful red-headed girl. From what I could tell, the first one was Auburn, but this girl was a true

redhead. We went together right up to the senior Prom. Her Dad was the Chief of the Fire Department for the city of Huntington Park. He had plans for me. Yep, you guessed it, A fireman. He relented when he learned that MY goal was to be a policeman. Be of service, he said.

In civics class, my girlfriend and I debated the merits of the John Birch Society. She was for it, and I was against it. The debate was going her way when I said, "Wait. Stop. I have an announcement to make." I turned to her and said, "Anyone supporting and defending the John Birch Society would not be going to the Senior Prom with me. This debate is over." With that, the bell rang, and the class was over. In retrospect, it was one of the stupidest things I could do. She was a great girlfriend, and I know she cared deeply about me. It was not my finest hour.

We both wound up with other dates for the Prom. We both wound up with heartache. I tried to make amends. No luck. I had sealed it for all time.

Choices. I learned that a choice is a fork in the road. It's always where another decision would produce a dramatically different result. Some choices are barely a dirt path. You could easily miss it. Some are like city street intersections. And some, the really big ones, are pushing you to take this freeway or that. As a result, you can easily get run over and lose your commitment to your chosen path.

10. Dreams

When I was five years old, I had two dreams that stayed with me my whole life. They were of great value to me.

The first was that I was swimming around in the ocean, my ship had sunk, and an enemy ship was heading our way. I woke up and told my Dad, "I know you were in the Navy, but I can never be in the Navy. My Dad said, "That's fine; you don't have to be a sailor."

A few months later (as I recall), in my dream, I was getting married. There were only a few people there. The woman turned around, and she was a redhead. For years all I could remember was that she was a redhead.

I met my first wife, and she had auburn hair. Later, after we were married, I saw that she had dyed her hair. Her hair would be several shades of whatever, even blonde, over the years. We were married for twenty-six years.

My third and final wife (the third time is a charm, they say) I met my wife on a blind date. The details are for another time, but I can tell you that when my friend asked me if I was ready to date, I said NO three times. Finally, when I opened the door to go out, he said, "Did I tell you she's a redhead?" I said, "What time and where." It turns out she's a real redhead. Some years after marrying her, I had the same dream I had as a child. But, this time, I could see my wife Margaret's face. I knew we were meant to be together. Twenty-nine years, October 1st. later, we still are. I love you, Toots.

11. PERSONAL GROWTH

In September of '72, my life and the lives of my family changed. It had, too. I could not let the past hold my family's future hostage. At this point, my Dad had passed a few years earlier of heart-related issues. My Mother passed away two years after that from Cancer. Then, two years later, my Mom passed away in a Navy Hospital (she had remarried a Navy retiree).

When Mom passed, I could see Aunts and Uncles that I hadn't seen since my Dad was alive. Mom was sick. I went into her room and could hardly believe what I was seeing. Mom was always on the heavy side. Now, she was skinny, and she looked a lot different. We talked a lot.

My aunt Peggy (my personal favorite) said the Doctor didn't think she would make it through the night outside the room. Everyone assured me it was OK to take a flight back home. They would call me.

Communication was scarce. Neither my parents nor my Grandparents believed in communication. I called the phone number I was given, and they said she was no longer in the hospital. I took that to mean she was dead. Another chapter of my life had closed. I owed her a lot.

About two years later, I was eating lunch with a client on the top of a boat permanently docked in Long Beach. Walking down the stairs, I saw my Mom sitting on one of those round Victorian couches. She saw me. I couldn't believe it. I asked my client if he could take a cab back to his

office. "Sure," he said, "You've got a bit of catching up to do."

She explained that she suddenly got better overnight. No one had a good reason other than no one thought to tell me. We had her over for dinner that night, and she met our oldest son, Steve, her grandson. She seemed thrilled. Two weeks later, she had passed of a heart attack. For sure, this time.

Choosing The Quality Of My Life

Not long after that happened, my Sister Dale graduated from high school in Orem, Utah. We went to support her.

On the way back from her graduation, I told my wife we needed to change how we lived dramatically. I was done living the way we had. We needed to think about several things; quality of life was chief among the things we discussed. I took the first baby step by throwing my package of cigarettes out of the window of our car somewhere in Nevada.

For the next 27 years, I did not smoke or drink. I spent a lot of time ministering to the needs of others while not seeing to the needs of my own family.

My wife and I discussed raising our son and realized we needed structure. Neither of us had a childhood that anyone

would want to emulate. We needed a plan and structure with access to people who had successfully raised their children. We also decided that we both needed prayer and spirituality in our lives.

I had previously started down the path of becoming a minister and understanding a better plan for our life. We affiliated with a local church.

As time passed, the church became all-consuming for us, especially for me. It became obvious that spending 10 to 12 hours a day working five days a week, church responsibilities on Monday and Wednesday evenings, Saturday afternoons, and Sunday from 5:30 a.m. to well past 7 p.m. counseling and helping others. At the same time, my children came to resent me, and our life quality began deteriorating every day.

Life took many twists and turns. It had been taking those turns as far back as when I purchased the overhead lifting business, I became one of the youngest entrepreneurs in the steel and marketing industries. I was privileged to speak at prearranged schools to promote sales and marketing as a career path for young people.

They paired me with a man named Ed Ramp. Ed was the President of a single-point steel distribution center in Los Angeles. We had spoken a few times together. One day he asked, "Why don't they talk about your education and not just your accomplishments?" I said, "Ed, I haven't yet gone to college, I've been a little busy. I graduated High School, married at age 19, went into the Air Force, went to Vietnam,

came home, and started a successful business in Florida. Then, I purchased (my second business) the business I'm in now. Today, I'm working 10 to 12-hour days to support a wife that doesn't work, our son, my Mother, Father, and Sister-in-law." I said all this with an unintentional sour tone. Then I said, "I've been a little busy."

Ed said, "Wow, you have been busy." But, DR, You have to go to college for no reason other reason than to network with your fellow alumni." I said, "Really. exactly where should I go to college?" He didn't hesitate, "U.S.C. (the University of Southern California in downtown Los Angeles)." "Ed, I can't afford that, and when would I find the time?" He said, Why don't you find a Junior College near your home and go at night."

College

I thought about it and decided to attend the local JC (junior college). I wanted familiar subjects when I enrolled until I was in the groove of studying again. However, I noticed that the classes I wanted were all taught by E Ramp. Could he be my speaking partner?

The answer came on the night of the first class within minutes. He introduced himself to the class, then turned to me and said, "Hello, DR, I'm glad you've taken my advice." He went on to explain his comment to the rest of the class. At the first break, we went outside together. He said, "DR, I have a proposition for you. Would you consider teaching this and the other classes you're taking from me? I'll pay you \$35.00 per hour for each of the classes. In other words, you'll

get \$315.00 a week, \$1,260 a month and I will correct and give grades for the mid-term and finals in the class.”

“Ed, are you sure about this?” He said, “DR, you have real-life experience that is much more valuable to these students. Use it, teach it. What do you say?” I said, “YES, doing this would be an honor.” In the marketing class I taught for Ed, we put together the original marketing plan for Armor All.

It was a successful relationship that lasted one full year. Ed also taught me how to challenge a class. I knew I was going to be an entrepreneur my whole life, I just wanted the education and the connections I would make from taking courses I couldn’t challenge at night. It allowed me to complete my Bachelor’s degree in two years. Thanks Ed.

Businesses I’ve Started, Purchased, or Took Over are listed in the Exhibit Section of this book.

12. DOING BUSINESS

My first book was titled *“How to Sell.”* I wrote it out of my frustration of finding people who could sell. It was sold to a Technical School as a school course. My next book was *“How to sell cars using the Internet.”* A GM vendor purchased it to present to all of the Cadillac Dealers in the U.S.

My course changed again when I tried to stay in Law School. My wife asked that I cut back too many hours, too much travel, etc. Because my answer was in agreement with what she wanted. we sold the business and moved back to

California. I purchased a print shop and an adjoining small advertising agency. I had these for less than a year before selling them.

Having moved back to the same area where we once lived, we settled into LaVerne, California.

A friend owned a pump company. It was supposed to be serving all of southern California, but he didn't have enough people to do that. So, I asked to work with him. First and foremost, I wanted to learn the business. I had asked him three times before he finally said YES.

However, he had a condition. I would be required to read a book that was about one hundred and seventy pages long. It was a Primer on "How pumps work and how to size them for an application." Embedded somewhere in the book was a formula that I needed to memorize. Whenever I started reading the book, I fell asleep at my desk. After a few days, I asked the owner to meet with me privately.

When we met, here's what I said, "Here's the deal: I've sold a variety of products that I didn't know how to size correctly. Pumping anything, it's good to know that it comes in here (pointing to my mouth) and goes out here (my hand was pointed at my backside). That is all I need to know. I'm positive we have a proposal sheet with all the pertinent questions. So, the deal is. I promise to get this filled out before ever requesting a proposal. You have to promise that it will receive immediate attention if I give you one." "**Deal,**" he said.

The following day, I started calling on prospects and chasing leads in my own territory, downtown Los Angeles, California. In three months, the region had done well, and as a reward, they moved me to Bakersfield, California.

I know what you are thinking. That was a reward? That was my family's feeling as well. We felt as though we were being exiled. Since he would subsidize rent for a while, my wife and I had some conditions. The house must have a pool and be located near great schools. We never got the pool.

I was frustrated when I found out that Bakersfield had the policy to buy from locals first. So, I looked for a business to get us into the doors of as many oil businesses as possible. I found one in Oildale (An excellent place for an oil-related business, right?). Most people in Bakersfield believed that to be the wrong side of the tracks (the poor part of town). That understanding did not work for me. After all, both Getty and Chevron had purchasing offices in Oildale.

I talked to the man I had worked with into buying the business, and he agreed to let me have a small piece of it. In two years, we grew the company from \$40,000 per month to more than \$200,000 per month with an office on the California coast and in Wyoming. My core belief for a business, any business, is that it must be customer-centric. Meaning that if you genuinely help others get what they want, you'll have what you need.

The best example of this (for this business) was a government client that needed an oil computer. I asked how

much time before it is required. "They tell me they could have used it last week. So, now would be good." I said, "I'll get back to you."

Today, you would look up an oil computer on Google, and then, once you find out who makes it, you would call the manufacturer and buy it. However, in those days, the Internet had not even been invented.

I had a secret weapon that allowed me to find anything. If it was manufactured anywhere in the world, I could locate it. My weapon of choice was the regional library, which typically had a research section. They would take requests.

However, you could not keep doing that. So, I made it my mission to get to know the research librarian. Sometimes I'd go months without needing this weapon. However, she was always top of mind. It was like a secret department within the company. No one in the company knew that I was doing this. It made me look even more knowledgeable when I came up with the correct answer.

In this case, she found one manufacturer of the device in the U.S. I took down a few of the fundamental facts to verify that's what was needed. Once verified, I called the company and ask for its CEO. They were in Tulsa, Oklahoma. We talked for a bit about the product. I casually asked about representation here in the west. "We don't have any." He said the product is still pretty new. I asked him what it would take to become a distributor. He said they would have to purchase two units, one for stock and one more to sell from inventory. If you do that, we'll also pay the freight. I said I

needed the one yesterday. Why don't I pay the increase in shipping costs, and you can send both? We agreed. The product arrived Monday morning on Saturday, and I had the invoice and both units delivered to the client before noon on Monday. The computers were \$20,000 apiece, and we sold both of them. Not bad for a weekend.

We sold and repaired various pumps, compressors, and other oil field equipment. The most crucial pump to me was a Positive Displacement Pump. So defined, because anything entering the pump will come out the other end. In New York, hotels used pumps like these to pump bed sheets through cleaning. The pump consisted of two parts: the rotor (turns); the stator (stays in place while the rotor turns inside). The rotor is a helical screw design. It's called a PC or progressive cavity pump. Before using the pump in a vertical application, it had always been used as a horizontal inline pump.

This product fascinated me. I couldn't get over its simplicity. It was a bit tricky to make, but we made it. I had already sourced the stators and a manufacturer for the rotor.

One day, my partner's Brother and Father, who owned another business, showed up and terminated our relationship. He had no idea what I was spending nights and weekends on.

After spending time mourning the loss. A good friend backed me for manufacturing a business idea for a downhole oil pump to replace the industry-standard surface-mounted scissor unit called a "Jack Pump." Our

product would go as deep as 2,800 feet. Its surface size allowed it to fit underneath a kitchen sized table.

The pump design was a PC Helical Screw pump. We used it vertically. I worked with an engineer friend, and we invented a connection between the head of the pump and the sucker rod that always had a water well pump on the end of it that was modified for pumping oil.

The design of the water well pump was from the 1800s with very few modifications but with better material. Unfortunately, even with better materials, they were highly inefficient, and the seals would quickly wear out if there was any "grit" of any type in the oil it was pumping.

With our method, instead of the sucker rod going up and down, it would rotate slowly, turning the pump and pumping the oil to the surface as long as the well had some fluid in it.

While it had its limitations (everything does), it worked as it was supposed to in the field. We beta-tested it, and several shallow well oil companies were watching. The initial test showed that we outlasted the pump jack by at least 2:1 or more. The cost of retrofitting the pump was a fourth of what a Pump Jack repair cost. Our unit was half the price of a Pump Jack when it was new.

After the initial test, Mobil and Shell oil ordered more than 100 of them. Our new company was a solid go. We began receiving orders from all over the U.S., anywhere there were shallow wells.

About a year after we started the company, a Pump Jack, manufacturer, a competitor, came along and offered us each a considerably large check to essentially go away. It was large enough that I could have retired at age 36 for the rest of my life. I was proud and excited. When we told our wives (they were also best friends), they said, "*Listen, Buster, I married you for better or worse, not for lunch.*" I countered, but I could help you raise our six children. It would be a new adventure." Still **NO**.

Both my partner and I were devastated. We thought we had accomplished the unattainable. It was *UnLikely* that something like this would ever happen again. It took us a week or so to decide what to do with our money. We reasoned that we made it in oil; why not do something in the oil business. So we purchased an oilfield in Duncan, Oklahoma, right behind the Halliburton offices in Duncan. It was initially an Indian find.

For the next couple of years, we made money while we slept. My partner's law practice was beginning to flourish again, and I was running a small oil tool company that wanted to be international. They hired me as their new CEO.

It was a couple of years after that when everything fell apart. We went to bed, and the oil price was \$32.50 per bbl (barrel), and in the morning, it went to \$18.50 per bbl. That price wasn't going to work for us. It costs us \$18.50 per bbl to pump it out of the ground

We ultimately sold the lease for ten cents on the dollar.

Within the next six months, we lost it all. Fortunately, I had an unused VA loan, and we found a zero-lot-line three-bedroom home with 1,400 sq. ft. for \$1.00 down and the payment for the home. It was also my first experience with an HOA.

We built a two-story dollhouse in one bedroom for the girls to sleep in their room. We made a two-story western building in the boys' room with a jail on the first floor. That was Steve's room. He needed his own privacy. He was 12 or 13 at the time.

I was now leading a company that sold tools and technology equipment that changed the dynamics of testing oil fields and geothermal wells. I started traveling around the world about six times a year. I did that for a couple of years.

I had been on most offshore oil platforms in the north sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and others in foreign countries.

On one of my first trips to Saudi Arabia, I was supposed to work with senior management of the Saudi/Kuwait oil company in Kafji, Saudi Arabia.

I arrived in Riyadh the night before. I asked the Concierge how to get from the hotel to the oil camp. He said you could take a bus, a taxi, or a Limo. I'll take the Limo, please. A stretch Mercedes Benz Limo arrived at the hotel at the appropriate time the following day. It was the first time

I'd been away from a large city in Saudi Arabia without an escort.

Upon arriving at the gates of the encampment, there was a lot of confusion. The Limo driver told me to stay in the car. Within thirty minutes, the senior management team for the camp had arrived and formed a line near the vehicle. I didn't realize it until they opened the door, and I stepped out, but they had also laid a red carpet down for me to walk on.

I bowed and shook their hands. These two countries had never gotten along and hired a Japanese firm to run the facility. Through an interpreter, I asked, "Who's paying for the Limo." Clients were required to pay all our expenses. A couple of days after the event, I overheard an Australian who was recounting the tale of this guy arriving by Limo. It was a Mercedes Benz Limo reserved for members of the Royal Family. Now I knew why everyone was so confused.

On our base tour, I heard a noise overhead like a bomb going through the air. It landed on a ship in the harbor in a split second. The Iraqis were fighting the Kuwaitis and just blew up a ship. It almost looked like something out of a war movie.

The bomb hit mid-ship and then sank instantly. I turned to the Australian giving the tour and said, "Can we get that Limo back? I'm ready to leave now." He said, "No, Mate, you're here for the week.

13. THE POWER OF 42

As you've already read, the similarities between my Father and me were hard to deny. When so many people draw a comparison between the two of us, it becomes hard to ignore. In fact, it takes an *UnLikely* step towards an end.

I was at Amarillo AFB when my Dad died. The Red Cross searched for me all over downtown Amarillo. It was my first weekend pass, and since I arrived at the base and I didn't understand the sign-out process, I was listed as though I were AWOL (absent without (permission to leave)).

When they found me, I enjoyed a party; we all jumped off the second-story balcony surrounding the pool. I wasn't drunk because I've never really enjoyed drinking beer or alcohol.

The notification was brutal. The moment they found me, they rushed me back to my room to change clothes, repack my street clothes for the weekend, and then transported me back to the base in a Red Cross vehicle.

Before I could leave the base [again], I had to go before the OIC (Officer In Charge), who signed me out on a two-week emergency leave. Then, the Red Cross rushed me to the airport, where a plane was being held for me. We were going back to Los Angeles via Denver, Colorado. My Dad grew up in Colorado. Our family has a rich history there—a story for another time.

The stewardess was very understanding and continued to bring me more tissues. I sobbed most of the way back to Los Angeles.

A family member met me at the airport and drove me to my parent's home in South Gate. Family members I hadn't seen in a long time included my grandparents (Dad's Mom and Dad).

Dad was buried under a tree in the Masonic section of the Brea Cemetery. Grandpa was a 32° Mason, and he pulled some strings to get him into that privileged section. He could have been buried at the Veterans Cemetery along the 405 near the 10 freeways in west Los Angeles as a veteran. It was still open in those days.

Everyone was in such a rush. After the burial, Mom and I went back to the house. I received everything I was ever going to get to remember my Dad. The inventory looked like this:

- 4 Plain white starched shirts
- 3 Pair of cuff links
- 2 Tie bars (one was a miniature slide rule that worked), and the second was a simple gold bar.

My Dad used a rug-making machine in the backyard to make wool rugs when he had his heart attack. I also received the two rugs my Dad had finished that day.

When the heart attack struck, my Mom drove him over 20 miles to the Doctor's office. He passed out [again] en route. Once there, they put him on an exam table. The Doctor and Mom were talking about Dad and his health issues when my Dad reportedly sat straight up on the exam table and said, "Where am I? Someone get me a cigarette." He laid back down on his own and died. He was forty-two years old.

Dad had a weak heart due to scarlet fever, a childhood illness; still, everyone said I was just like him. After the funeral, people told me that I should be careful since I was "just like" my Dad, I might suffer the same fate.

Here's the impact that those words had on me, thinking I might also die at forty-two. I was 18 when my Dad died; I thought forty-two was far from where I stood.

In my mid-twenties, I had the responsibility for the overhead lifting company. At this point, I had taken it nationally, and we were building equipment from a catalog of my own design.

One day, my first wife asked me, "Do you know how you spell tact?" I said, "T-A-C-T." I thought she was playing a game. She looked at me and said, "Here's how you really spell it. . . P-I-S-S—O N—Y O U." "What, I said. "No, I don't."

She said, "DR, for some time now, you've been pushing and pushing. You've worked longer hours and have little or

no patience with anyone, not even me. It is as though you're on some mission to get things done quickly."

With that last comment, it hit me. "You'll probably die at age forty-two." Apparently, I had let it control who I was and where I was going.

I had a trip scheduled for the next Monday; I vowed to spend whatever time I had that wasn't with a client to think this revelation through.

What it boiled down to for me was the quality of my life and the lives of my family. We only had one son, Steven, but we hoped to have a girl. When she arrived, we named her McKay. Quality time, for a time, was important. What became more important in business was a whole new attitude.

My personal tagline became, "*How can I be helpful.*" People treated me better, and I treated them respectfully because I listened. To this day, I use that phrase. It's on my personal website (DRRawson.com).

I was still aware that forty-two could be my expiration date. I ensured sufficient life insurance and savings to transition without me. That is the best I can do. After that, it's out of my hands.

At age forty, I felt myself getting a little apprehensive. Business just went south with yet another downturn in the oil industry. I had recommended to the Board that I be let go and that the founders take over the company, or they would

lose it all. By the time I was forty-one, I was once again financially stable, and the future looked bright.

Then, the morning I turned forty-two, I came to a strong realization. I had a clean bill of health from the Doctor, I felt good, life is good and the idea that I'm going to die anytime soon is just wrong.

Forty-three, forty-five, and then forty-six arrived. It was at that point I said to myself, "*You need a new plan.*" As it turned out, I had to reinvent who I was completely. It was the year that my first wife and I split up. We divorced the next year.

I've realized that everyone should have the quality of life they want. You don't have to be wealthy or live in a mansion to have a wonderful life. The qualities that make my life wonderful won't necessarily be the same for you. You can define it. This is something you can absolutely control. Don't let someone tell you, "It's **UnLikely** that YOU will ever change."

14. LETS TRAVEL

There was a time in my life when I traveled around the world six or so times a year. So let's have some fun. *Buckle up.*

I had never been to England. My very first trip and the itinerary was staggering. Every day was a twelve to fourteen-hour day. In addition to all that was scheduled, I wanted some time for myself. I needed time for myself.

It was already around 3 p.m. local time when I arrived in London. I quickly checked in, threw my bags on the bed, went downstairs, and went out the side entrance. I had been told you get better drivers and rates using the side entrance. That was true in London and anywhere in India.

It was my fourth week of an almost seven-week tour. My clean clothes ran out two days earlier. So, needless to say, I needed some me-time. The cab I selected was great. He asked where I was from, and as it turned out, he had a Sister living in Bakersfield and knew it well. He said, "Where are we going?" I said, "Find a place where we can sit for just a few minutes so that I can collect my thoughts and lay out my plan." "Plan," he said. "This is going to be fun."

We spent a few minutes deciding the best way to approach this trip. Here's what I said, "First, I need to go somewhere to buy some personal clothing, shirts, socks, and a few other things." He said, "Saville Row. I know just the

place." I said, "Next, I want to see all that London has to offer, all the major tourist sites. I want to see them all tonight. I don't care when we finish."

He was a jovial sort of fellow, a bit overweight, with an excellent disposition. He smiled and said, "That is too much to get done in one evening. If we drive all night, you still wouldn't be able to see that much." I said, "Let me tell you the rest of the plan." "More," he said, rolling his eyes towards the back of his head. "O.K. Yank, let's hear it then."

I said, "I want to roll up to a site like the Bridge, or the tower, or one castle or another, and then once there, you'll pick out a nice spot and take a picture of me, and I'll take a picture of you in front of the place." He thought momentarily and then said, "This is going to be great fun." I said, "*Let's get to it.*"

We went for clothes first. I actually changed all my clothes in the store. He asked how the prices were. I said, "Great. I purchased six white dress shirts for \$75 apiece. He said, "No, you paid close to \$90 U.S.; you forgot about the exchange rate." I said, "Wow, I hope these are really good shirts." It turned out they were. I was still starching and wearing them three and four years later.

Next was Buckingham Palace. A great shot of the guards, the gates, and the Palace. And so it goes. We stopped at one of his favorite pubs; we saw more than twenty places. To this day, it was the most fun I've ever had in London.

It would be a few months before I returned to London on business. A former General of Iran had spoken with our Agent in Kuwait about me. They were looking for someone to negotiate a deal for oil for the country of Tunisia. They wanted me to negotiate the deal and market it to a major oil company.

Once there, it turned out differently, but I spent a week in the basement of a central hotel off Hyde Park negotiating a deal for oil and other resources. Armed guards with automatic weapons were stationed at each corner of the room and outside the doors. They protected us the entire time we were in the hotel. That was interesting.

Let's go to Kuwait. I'm meeting with our Agent after hours and casually discussing various subjects. He said, "Let me share one of the best stories about Kuwait."

He said, "When I was a boy of ten, my cousin, the King's son, and I were at a ceremony where the new pipeline was to open. It would deliver oil from the desert to the sea to be taken to market by oil tankers. Adding the pipeline held the promise of great wealth for our country.

The ceremony called for my Uncle, the King, to open the valve, thus turning on the oil flow. He let my cousin and me help him turn the valve. As we were turning it, he leaned over and whispered, "I wish this were water." Years later, the King had the first saltwater conversion plant built offshore to serve the country.

Anyone for Scotland? I arrived at Inverness late in the afternoon. It was a very cold and windy day. Inverness is on the northernmost point of Scotland. I can tell you it didn't make a perfect first impression on me. I had ripped the arm of a good suit as I disembarked the plane. As I said, it was not a good first impression, and the whole evening was a little off-putting.

The travel folks had put me up at an old castle that was retrofitted to a small hotel. The room that they put me in was huge. In the bathroom was a six-foot or so-long bathing tub. It was and is, to this day, the largest bathroom tub I've ever seen.

Dinner was at 7 p.m., and a suit and tie were required. The dining room was also very large, more the size of a ballroom. I was seated with a couple from Wales in the south of the United Kingdom (U.K.). There was a large fireplace. I could walk into it standing up. I'm six foot three inches. The mantel was at least six and a half feet from the hearth. The hearth was probably ten feet long and four feet deep. It was enormous.

The following day, I was scheduled to go out on two of the offshore oil rigs.

Unfortunately, due to the North Sea weather conditions, the trip out had to be postponed until the following week. The good news was that this was my last stop (or so I thought). The better information was that I would spend the weekend in this lovely town.

I spent the weekend exploring old castles, going to a flea market, and attending a local movie theater. At the theatre, I had an experience that had to be seen to appreciate the event fully. I'll do my best to describe the scene and what happened.

We all know that everyone drives on the left (wrong) side of the road in Scotland. After a day of travel in Northern Scotland, I decided a movie would be nice. The movie Rambo, "First Blood," had just been released. I considered myself quite lucky to park right in front of the theater at four in the afternoon.

I was excited to see the movie. Thinking I was a passenger at the curb (even though I had a steering wheel in front of me), I opened the door to get out just like I was a passenger.

Two seconds after I opened the door, a bicyclist put his front tire and wheel between the door and the car right at the hinge. It immediately lodged itself there, stopping the forward movement of the bike . . . instantly and violently. In his mid-twenties, wearing riding shorts and a hoodie, the rider flew over the car's hood and down onto the street, where he hit the curb with his knee after rolling a couple of times on the ground. He landed on his back. His arms and legs were bleeding.

To my surprise, he jumped to his feet, collected himself, and walked right over to me. Then, he began to tell me off in no uncertain terms. He challenged my manhood, genealogy, and abilities and threw in a few swear words for good

measure. When I thought he was done, I opened my mouth, and in a few nano-seconds, I said, "I'm sorry." I was going to say a bit more, but when he realized I was a Yank, he went off on me again. He was relentless.

To my further surprise, he picked up his crumpled bike and limped off with his bicycle, mumbling something. I don't believe that what he was mumbling was meant for my ears.

As he walked off, all I could think of was that if that had happened almost anywhere in the U.S., I would have been sued and probably owed him money for the rest of my life. It was an unreal experience. The movie was good.

Let's go to Number 10 Downing Street in London. It's the home of the Prime Minister of England. In this case, Margaret Thatcher. I was scheduled to speak with her about oil reserves in the North Sea for fifteen minutes. She was a formidable woman. We hit it off, as they say, and fifteen minutes quickly turned into forty-five terrific minutes that I shall never forget. We talked about oil reserves and a bit of politics in other countries.

Here we are, back in Saudi Arabia. I'm there at the invitation of the King. He's asked me to review their reserve strategy and numbers for specific wells. He also wants me to attend a meeting called by the Oil Minister. It's anticipated that I'll be in Saudi Arabia for at least four days.

I toured the fields using the King's personal plane in the company of the Oil Minister. It was a long day. On the next

day, the minister had planned an evening under the stars, in the desert, where his staff would prepare steak and lobster that he had flown in for the occasion.

He loaded two engineers from Aramco and me into his personal Range Rover, and in minutes, we were off-road, searching for the perfect place to enjoy the evening. It took almost an hour of aimlessly driving around, searching for the right spot. But it was worth the time spent. While driving, I was focused on having a discussion with the minister. I asked, "Is it true that only Saudi citizens can own a Range Rover in Saudi Arabia." He said, "Yes, it is." He instructed me to look out of my side view windows. There was a great line that reminded me of the Oklahoma land rush. Everyone traveled to wherever the oil minister wanted to stop.

What was worth noting is that staff were all driving GMC and Chevrolet 4X4s. At the same time, we rode very comfortably, only occasionally noticing the bumps in our path. The others were bouncing so hard that they were hitting their heads on the roof of the seating area. "Ah," I said. "Clearly, there's a big difference."

I also asked, "How will we know when we've found the right place?" "It will be instinctual when you see it." Sure enough, there was a crater that a large falling object from the heavens could have made. There was also what looked like a wide flat roadway that made its way all around the crater. "In words I'd heard before, he said, "*This is the place.*" He drove around the crater until every vehicle had encircled the top of the crater. I said, "Yep, this is the spot."

The staff brought four lovely overstuffed chairs with gold trim, side tables, and a coffee table. They had also brought a dining table and four chairs for us to use when dinner was ready. They had made a large fire and were roasting and cooking the entire meal that way. Honestly, it looked like the “*Sand*” room in the Palace. The silverware was gold, and the plates were trimmed in gold with the King’s insignia on each plate, saucer, and cup.

We all talked about the oil business and the impact of the Middle East on the market. The year was 1984.

We’re in Qatar at a remote oil camp on the sand. The temperature was near 140°. It cooled to a mere 120° in a tent without air conditioning.

Back at the base camp in Qatar, I’m standing at the toilet, thankful there is a toilet. I leaned over to flush, and then it happened. The portable buildings had been built on 24” centers, and then the old-style oil linoleum had been laid over the top as a floor. I was, at the time, 6 ft. 3 in. and 250 lbs. It was too much weight, and my size 13 shoes went right through the flooring. I found myself standing at the toilet where the top of the bowl was now equal height to the bottom of the zipper on my pants.

As you can see, these small stories are all part of my treasured memories. That’s why they’re so *UnLikely*.

15. MORE TRAVEL

Over the years, air travel has changed. It's also changed based on circumstances and time. First, let's look at air travel.

In the military, I flew courtesy of Uncle Sam on C-130s and C-141s. They are without insulation and are noisy. The longest trip was in a C 130 from Mac-tan AFB across from Cebu in the Philippines to Japan, Hawaii, Elmendorf AFB in Anchorage, Alaska, and McCord AFB in Tacoma, Washington.

The flight from the Philippines was a furniture flight back to the States. The Pilot, Co-Pilot, and Crew Chief collected duty-free furniture they bought in the Philippines to take back to the U.S. Everything was fine until we landed at Hickam Air Field in Hawaii. We were there long enough to let the drinking begin. When we took off, the Pilot was three sheets into the wind. The takeoff took us over water at the end of the runway. The right tip of the wing was about twenty-four inches or less off the water as we made our way to Alaska.

We had been flying for a few hours when suddenly, the plane developed severe and loud vibrations. We could hear the Pilot talking to our destination air traffic controllers. The Pilot said, "*We have a severe vibration in our number 3 engine.*" Within minutes, the vibration and the engine were gone, and we were flying with one wing higher than the other.

The Pilot radioed back; the engine and the vibration were gone. We dropped our altitude and opened the rear cargo ramp. Unfortunately, we lost nearly everything except our luggage, which would ultimately travel to McCord AFB.

The Crew Chief ordered ANY unnecessary equipment, luggage, or cargo to be tossed out of the back of the plane. So we had to remove everything, including the floors and the hoist system. The aircraft almost leveled out but still flew at an angle, meaning the wings weren't level. It was awkward. I felt bad for the crew; they had all that furniture they had spent money on, and it was gone.

When we arrived at Elmendorf, the landing went well. However, we had to change planes before heading to McChord AFB.

So that was the worst of the military flights. Let's talk civilian.

Over the years, the lighting panel and mask compartment fell on my head. I was in the restroom when a panel just popped off, making it very difficult to get out of that small space.

On a separate flight, there was another incident. They say every landing is good, and when our front landing gear didn't come down, they foamed the runway. It turned out that it did come down, but it wasn't registering correctly on the panel.

Now, we're on a non-stop flight from Singapore to Los Angeles. The food carts on an airplane are heavy and can hurt you if you get in their way. My food had just arrived, piping hot. I had just been served (Yes, they actually used to serve meals on flights). The kosher meals were the best. Without any warning, a run-away cart came down the narrow aisle on its own. The stewardess jumped up into a passenger's lap, and the cart crashed into the cart I had been served from. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

On another trip, I arrived in Singapore for its 25th anniversary as a country. I was asked to address a group of people over dinner. For whatever reason, the dinner didn't settle well with me. When I went outside the hotel, I saw a McDonald's not far away. That was my actual dinner.

Upon returning to the hotel, I received a call from the lead engineer on a geothermal well we were doing in a remote location. He had traveled a long distance to get to a phone to call me. I needed to stop everything and get to Indonesia.

I was able to get a car to take me to the airport. From there, I flew to Indonesia. Once there, I transferred to a DC-3 that had been around for 48 years or so at that time. These planes were so sturdy and well-built that they are still in service in remote parts of the world today.

That small plane took me to a small town. After that, I chartered another small plane to fly me about 200 miles. Once there, I walked about a half-mile to where the river

was, and two men had me sit in the canoe to travel ten miles up the river to the job site.

Once there, it took about two hours to resolve the operator error. When that was done, I went back to my hotel by canoe, small plane, bigger small plane, commercial plane, and by car. I left late in the day before and arrived late, but still daylight the next day. I did this in a suit and tie.

One of the many small towns I visited in the oil business had an interesting method of getting your luggage to you. We were all told to go to the front of the terminal and retrieve our luggage. The checked baggage handler should have said catch your luggage. You spotted your luggage, and they threw it through a hole in the fence for you to catch on the other side.

On yet another flight, the stewardess said, you can retrieve your luggage at carousel number one. It was a small airport, but when she said that, I thought this place was bigger than it looked. No, my first thoughts were correct. It was too easy; there was no carousel number beyond one.

When Southwest went to a first come, first seated boarding plan, the joke was: What happens when the Pilot's seat has been taken? *Answer:* You get removed and get a discount for the next flight. *That is a joke.*

On one trip to the Middle East, I went to Kuwait first. The game plan was to spend a week on the sand working with their technicians and ours to get some sensitive

equipment to work in extreme heat. It was 140° on the sand. Under the tent, it was about 20° cooler.

When that was completed, I would fly to the United Arab Emirates. Whenever I was in the area, the President of the UAE would ask me to come by. He always referred to me as the Dr. of Oil. We did a lot of business with his country.

On this particular trip, I checked into the Hyatt Regency in Kuwait City after spending a week on the sand. It was a very welcomed change. The following day, I was scheduled to fly over to Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE. There were usually two cars that met someone serving in my capacity besides the one I was in.

The morning I was to leave, the air was calm, and I didn't know what horrible things had been planned for the passengers on my flight.

The temperature was headed towards 115° by mid-day and climbing. My flight was around 9 a.m. I had checked my luggage and was standing on the stairs leading to an entrance at the front of the plane (in those days, we still loaded and unloaded on the tarmac in the Middle East). I had two bags in my hand and was approximately two and one-half feet from stepping inside the plane.

Around the corner came a stretch Mercedes Limo. I recognized one of the men leaning out the window calling Dr. Rawson, Dr. Rawson. It was the personal bodyguard for our agent in Kuwait. Our agent and his chauffeur were in the car, and now the chauffeur had stopped the car.

The bodyguard and the chauffeur were still yelling my name and coming towards me, running as fast as they could. Suddenly, they were standing on one side of the steps and asked me to identify my luggage, and they quickly pulled it from the cart. One of the passengers demanded to know why I was being removed from the flight. Our agent's bodyguard said that his company needed me back in the camp where I had just spent a week. He said, "There was an incident."

They put all my luggage in the limo's trunk, and I sat in the back of the vehicle with our agent. The other men sat in front on the other side of the glass separator between the front and the back.

Once things were more settled and we were clear of the airport property, my friend, our agent, started asking questions on topics we had already discussed at the beginning of the week.

I had to break into whatever conversation was going on. I said, "Sir, With great respect for your needs, I'm supposed to meet the UAE President for dinner tonight. Will you have your people call them? They shouldn't send people to meet me. Will your people also let the President know I won't be there for a couple more days?" His answer was, "Sure, **No Problem.**"

There is a saying when you travel a lot. If someone says, "No Problem," there usually is or will be.

I had never been to his lavish home (a smaller version of a Palace). We had lunch there, told stories, and more. We even spoke of religion, and that was something one never did with any Arabic-speaking person. It was all very cordial. When lunch was over, he asked his chauffeur to take me to the camp where I had already spent a week. His parting words were, "You honor me with your presence in my home. Thank you for agreeing to come with us when we came to the airport."

When we arrived at camp, the foreman said, "Oh yeah, we fixed the problems hours ago. Spend the night here, and I'll have one of our best men take you to your hotel [again] in the morning." The next day, I arrived back at the Hyatt Regency. I called my wife because I didn't check in from the UAE as I had told her I would.

My wife said, "*Thank God you're alive.*" I quickly said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "Your flight was hijacked, and the plane is now stationary on the UAE tarmac. We all saw them throw a large man from the plane. We know your disposition. We feared the worst. Your children all think you're dead." For the next hour, I spoke with each of the children, trying to convince them I was alive and okay.

It turned out that the plane I was about to board was hijacked. The passengers were taken to Iran for about ten days and then released. They proved that they understood the doctrine of "Catch & Release."

On this trip, that day's activity haunted me for the rest of my time in the Middle East. There were still four more countries on the itinerary.

It was over a month later before I returned home, just before Christmas. After much thought, I realized that our agent had somehow learned of the terrorist plot. Next, I realized that he thought enough of me to keep me from harm's way. So once I was back at the office, I sent a telex to him. It simply said, "**Thank You, DR**"

The next day I received his response, "**You're most welcome.**"

16. Friends

One of the companies I had taken over at the request of the principal shareholder had two divisions. One was one of the first internet service providers in Southern California. The other was the development of one of the first touchpad computers called the Qbe.

Every company has unique stories to tell; we've already shared some of these. But, I promise, there's more to come.

I've hired many people to sell for me over the years. But, I've also hired some to act as a shill to drive prospects to me to close. Phil fell into the latter category.

If you put him into a room full of thirty people he'd never met before, he'd have everyone's business card by the end of the night. In some situations, he understood exactly how we could help the prospect. But he didn't know how to seal the deal (close) to get the business.

Meet Gavriel (Mark) Sanders

One week, Phil was particularly excited because he'd met a guy in telecom who was precisely my other half in business. He's a great communicator and so much more. So, I want to share our story with you, hoping you'll meet and get to know your Mark Sanders.

We set it up so that Mark would come to my office around 9 p.m. (I don't remember why it was so late).

Unfortunately, the night was unusually dark and very wet. He looked akin to a drowned rat just coming from his car to my office.

We sat across from each other at one end of the conference table. Mark told me about himself, his religious background, his daughter, his ex-wife, and his college days. We talked about what he wanted in life, what he wanted to do and be when he grew up. Mark is about ten years my junior.

As he talked, I wondered how quickly I could get him on our team. It wasn't immediately. I left those two companies within a month and started [again] the business of The Virtual.net. Its focus was on high-level technology consulting.

Mark finally left his employer. He came to work for me. I had just finished a consulting gig for a satellite telecommunications company. Our first project together was credit-challenged cell phones for LA Cellular. We had to create the network within an existing network of paid cell phones.

One of our first fun experiences was negotiating with two men that spoke Arabic (I thought). Mark was beside me. When we took our first break, he told me what they were speaking was in Bedouin Arabic. We never let on; we knew what they were saying until the end. Then they thought it was me that knew. It was all Mark. As it turned out, he speaks many languages (eleven).

One of our greatest collaborations was when we were working The [Virtual.net](#). By chance, I came across a help-wanted ad in the Orange County Register; the ad read:

CEO wanted. Call 555 714-1212

As it turned out, the ad, written by a man who was the CEO of a publicly traded insurance company, knew what he wanted. He had developed a business model to make the sale of casualty insurance easier on the client, less restrictive on the Broker, and make the carrier more profitable.

I responded to the ad on behalf of our consulting company, The Virtual.net. It was only Mark and me. The individual, we'll call him Deter Foust, asked us to come to Pasadena to one of his favorite cigar rooms. It was a good place for the three of us to meet and have a cigar, a snack, and a drink.

Mark is not a smoker. I was at that time. By the end of the evening, Mark was a little green around the gills.

Deter had us read the one-page business plan, and then the three of us spent two evenings discussing plans to start, run, and grow the company. We also discussed ways to prove the model that Deter had developed. Finally, after two days, Deter said, "Why don't you think about it for a couple of days and then send me something that says you understand what we've discussed."

Mark and I are like a hand in a glove. I'm not sure which is which. I think it varies depending on the project. I looked

at Mark and then told Deter we'll have a plan in your hand delivered via FedEx by 10:30 a.m. on Friday. It was very late Wednesday evening.

Honestly, the plan was genius. It solved several existing problems within the industry. Neither Mark nor I had ANY insurance experience, but we clearly understood the model. We started early the following day; we're visual, so we just started fleshing out an outline. Then, detailed descriptions, including the number and quantity of resources required. We estimated that \$5.3 million would get the plan to profitability.

We confidently sent our forty-two-page plan forward for consideration. Deter had two questions and then said, "OK, you have the contract to prove the model. After that, we'll select a CEO."

We knew the presentation had to be short and very on point, and we needed to get decision-makers to listen. So Deter helped us get initial appts. Then, the magic of referrals kicked in.

Mark and I wrote the presentation in about four hours. Mark has been on the radio and has that perfect presentation voice. We self-recorded the production onto three CDs, and I hit the road talking to Brokers and Carriers about what we could do for them.

After meeting them, I'd say, "The presentation is only five minutes long. Would you be willing to spend five minutes of your time, allowing me to show you how to

achieve a more profitable business?" No one turned the presentation down. Here's how the presentation went. First, they would say, "Sure, I'll watch the presentation. "At that point, I opened a laptop dedicated to the presentation, inserted the CD, closed the cover, and Mark's voice did all the heavy lifting. After that, I would ask for a commitment of how much business they could put on the platform. Our proof of concept required commitments totaling \$50,000,000 before seeking funding, building the software necessary, and starting our marketing efforts in earnest.

Mark and I have always made a great team. Through our mutual efforts, we hit our target within two weeks. During this time, Mark came in one day and announced:

"DR, I've had an epiphany." "Great," I said. "What is it?" He said, "I should be Jewish." "Wow," I said. "So, are you going to do the Sammy Davis Junior conversion where the Rabbi declares you a Jew?" He said, "No, I'm going before a board of Rabbis that will quiz me on the Torah. The entire process will be in Hebrew."

I said, "So, you're going to convert from a practicing Pentecostal minister to an Orthodox Jew. Does that about sum it up?" I said. "Yes, it does," he said. "OK, what can I do to be helpful?" I asked. He said, "Can I have Fridays off?" I quickly responded, "Sure." So, for several weeks, he attended classes, and then one day, he came into work wearing the traditional Kippah, Tzitzit (you could see his prayer strings), and he looked happier than ever.

Mark and I share a religious bond. Spirituality has always been important to me and to us.

Since those days, Mark and his wife Yehudit have always been there for me. He is truly my Brother from another Mother.

Today, Mark is Gavriel and is living in Jerusalem, Israel. His dream was for the two of them to move there. It took him three years to become an Israeli citizen. He moved there in June of 2023.

Meet Gary Friedman

I met Gary in the spring of '99. At that time, he was part of a team of coders working for an independent contractor. We had hired them to write the software we knew would be the basis for the InsureTrade program we had commissioned. We had spent months trying to break down and define exactly how the software would work (the scope).

Gary had someone he answered to, and that person didn't listen. Gary did. Gary was impressive in every way imaginable.

A couple of weeks before we let the independent coders go, I convinced Gary to join us. It was one of the defining moments of building the company. It began a friendship that has endured a great deal since 1999. Gary is also my Brother from a Jewish Mother.

After I left the company, Gary stayed on. When he left, he worked with me building Monet Medical. He finally decided to pursue his passion, photography.

He went to China to teach English, used the opportunity to hone his writing skills, and sent stories back to hundreds of people waiting to hear what comes next. It was riveting.

I've been privileged to work with Gary in several ways. We worked together at InsureTrade, The [virtual.net](http://www.virtual.net), Monet Medical and Armor Steel.

During this time, Gary met and married the love of his life, Carol.

We've worked on interviews, recordings, videos, and photography. He has been the key photographer for the Scottish Rite program and for all my business needs for photography. We're privileged to call him our personal photographer. Many of the pictures in this book and on my website have been taken by Gary. His photography site is FriedmanArchives.com.

As an author, Gary brings ease to his writing style, and his books on Sony cameras allow the reader to learn even the most complicated of skills easily. It's October of 2023, and Gary has written north of forty books on photography. He's also the associate editor for CameraCraft Magazine, the premier photographer publication.

Gary is a musical pioneer with his distributorship of the Xaphoon. He's also an inventor, and unlike most of us mere mortals, he has used his education to work for JPL in Pasadena. While there, he participated in placing a number of pieces of technology in space.

He also holds the Guinness Book of World Records for the smallest phone placed into a Nike running shoe: one shoe for the phone and one shoe for repair tools. It is a dream come true for the telephone repairman.

Gary is also a mentor, a wonderful writer, a great photographer, a great friend, and one of the most interesting and caring people I know (ask his grandkids and his wife they'll confirm it).

More family & friends

No one is an island. We all need help from others. This short section lists some of the people that I appreciate:

Family

Our six children (boy, girl, boy, girl, boy, and girl); they are Steve, McKay, Doug, Morgan, Cameron, and Katie.

My Sisters Diane and Dale, and my Brother Dave.

People that have worked for and with me. Over twenty-seven companies, and in each, eighty-nine percent of all the

employees stayed with me as long as I was at the helm. Thank you so much. It was an honor for me to work with people of your character and calibre.

In my case, behind a great woman is a man trying to live up to her expectations. My wife Margaret is:

My best friend. She is also the love of my life. She's my rock for her patience and understanding. She's the best Nana ever.

We love all of our fifteen grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

17. CADILLACS

She said, "If we're going to get married, you'll have to drive Cadillacs." So I thought about that for a minute and said, "Yes, I believe you're right. So where should we start?"

When we were married, Margaret had a 1984 Cadillac Eldorado. It was a great car. It always ran well and looked good. On the road, it was at its best.

We went down to Coast Cadillac in Long Beach, where she worked and selected a great used car. I needed room and capacity. They had a couple of used 1994 Concours in stock. One was all black. The car was very business-looking, but I wanted an edge. Dan Harris was the Service Director and a long-time friend of Margaret's. He overheard me say "edgy" and said, "Why don't you black the grill out, remove the trim from the side of the car and paint a gray pinstripe down each side. Then let's add some full chrome wheels." That was it. When the car was done, it was amazing. Everyone loved the car. On the road, it lived up to the Cadillac name.

From there, a procession of Cadillacs came into our life. The others were all new, but there were some great ones. We also bought the first Escalade produced and sold at the dealership when it was introduced.

My favorite is a 2002 Escalade with a tuned exhaust system and some trick chrome wheels, dual exhaust system,

and black. We owned an ornamental iron and steel company in Boulder City, NV.

We used the car for deliveries (loading on top), pulling heavy trailers, and much more. The vehicle always delivered the comfort, power, and presence that we wanted.

And my other favorite was a 2006 STS, black with chrome wheels. I owned the car for eight years and only put 50,000 miles on it. In retrospect, I wish I still had the car.

When it left my hands, there wasn't a ding, chip, scratch, swirl, or flaw of any kind, and the engine compartment was as clean as everything else in the car.

In 2013, Margaret and I were at a car show in Irvine. We have some cool Cadillac jackets with logos that match, and we were wearing them. A group of men came by and commented on the jackets. "Which Cadillac Club do you belong to?" they said. "None, there's no such thing," we said, almost in unison. He replied, "Yes, there is. We're members." We exchanged cards, and they were going to send us some information. That never happened.

We started researching the idea and found the National Club called the Cadillac and LaSalle Club (CadillacLaSalleClub.org). It was founded in 1958. They have more than 7,500 members worldwide and chapters in major cities. We became members in 2013. We never joined the Los Angeles Region Club.

We knew we would retire and move to Las Vegas as soon as we could and just thought it would be best to wait. So, in 2014, when we retired, we joined the Las Vegas Region.

The President of the club asked me to serve as her Vice President. Six months later, she took her wedding vows and moved east with her new husband.

I served for four years before resigning on the last day of 2020. Its people make the Las Vegas Cadillac Club (LVCC) the best. The friends we've made and the people we've met because of the club are incredible.

Let me tell you about Stuart Sobek. In April of 2019, we were putting on the largest display of Cadillacs Las Vegas had seen besides 2009 and 2016 when they held the Cadillac Grand National in Las Vegas. Cadillacs worldwide were driven, trailered, and flown in to compete in the show.

This particular show in April is called the Cadillac Through The Years event. Cadillacs shown are from 1903 to the present. They are all original, restored, modified, custom, or brand new. They're all great examples of Cadillacs. In 2019, it was our fourteenth annual event. This event typically draws 42 to 60 cars and more than 6,000 people to the Town Square shopping center on Las Vegas Blvd. In 2019 we had 102 vehicles and more than 10,000 attendees.

At that event, I was introduced to Stuart. He is the founder and CEO of the Las Vegas Concours d'Elegance. The year 2019 would be the first show. I met with Stuart, and he

asked me to serve as its first General Manager, responsible for everything Stuart ask me to do.

Definition:

Concours d'Elegance

([French](#): *Concours d'élégance*) is a term of French origin that means a "*competition of elegance*" and refers to an event where prestigious vehicles are displayed and judged.

Ultimately, the show (by the numbers) had 140 vehicles, with 110 of those judged. The cars had values from \$100,000 to more than \$20,000,000. Elegant and sporting vehicles are everywhere.

There would be 43 judges from around the world. Ultimately, some 2,500 to 3,000 people attended the show. It required a volunteer staff of 226 people. It started on Friday night with a Gala for 300 people, Saturday was the Concours event, and Sunday was a parade of vehicles in the Concours participants that wanted to drive down Las Vegas Boulevard. Later that morning, there would be a golf tournament.

Many of the Judges are the same ones used at Pebble Beach and other Concours. Pebble Beach is the most famous West Coast Concours. Many of the Judges, at the time of the event, ranked it with Pebble Beach. The Concours was held at the world-class Dragon Ridge course in McDonald Highlands in Henderson, Nevada (the neighboring

community south of Las Vegas). The event was on the 18th and 10th holes.

It was reported that sixty Concours were in the U.S. When the Concours season concluded, The Las Vegas event ranked 5th overall. This was an excellent rating for a brand-new event.

18. THE NIGHT THAT CHANGED MY WORLD

Imagine you are forty-seven years old, you and your wife have decided to divorce, and she is now moving everything out of your home. She's taking all the family's possessions and returning to her Bakersfield home.

I thought I would die at age forty-two and didn't (it would be 2007 (13 yrs) at age sixty-one before I would die of a heart attack and be brought back to life).

My medical consulting business was doing well. Seemingly, you have everything, and now, without family, I feel like I've failed them (and me).

In one day, she moved and took nearly everything from the house (no longer a home). On that weekend, I withdrew from the ministry and completely disengaged for two days from everything. Then, it occurred to me that I needed to fast and pray to decide where I wanted my life to go.

After moving her out of the house, the only things left were my favorite chair, my Grandmother's hope chest, a few utensils, a kingsize bed with one set of sheets, and a set of towels in the bathroom. Otherwise, this sizable six-bedroom home with maid's quarters sitting on one-third of an acre with a pool and outdoor sauna was empty. My Lincoln Town Car and a Ford van I used for my business were in the large four-car garage.

As the sun set that first evening after they were gone, I settled into my chair to begin my planned twenty-four-hour period of reflection and decision.

My first thoughts were of my business since that supported what would become my ex-wife and our children. Is that business model what I really wanted? Do I enjoy it? Am I passionate about the business? My first decisions were about the company. I decided to stay the course and increase my market share.

Next, something I'd never really allowed myself to do was think about me, my personal future, and what I wanted, even down to what clothes I wanted to buy. After much thought, I decided to move to Manhattan Beach, Ca. I always wanted to live on the beach. It wouldn't take long, and I found a two-story townhome with two bedrooms, a five-car garage under the townhome, and an ocean view!

What kind of a person did I want to be from this point forward? But, the most important conversation going on in my head and the most crucial part of the discussion was how I was ever going to find someone for me. Then it hit me: *If you don't decide what you want, you may settle for anything or anyone.*

The time spent was thinking about physical and spiritual things to me and understanding what I wanted in a partner. Every topic I could think of that was associated with personal relationships was reviewed in my mind. It could probably be summed up this way:

If I met the right person, rather than dwelling on the physical, we would first discuss what we wanted, what we were willing to accept, what we could compromise on, and then there was what we absolutely couldn't accept.

19. THE SINGLE YEARS

Within the span of the next sixty days (after my life-altering twenty-four-hour meeting with myself), I doubled the number of machines to prove or disprove back injuries (that were placed in Chiropractors' offices). In addition, the number of clients that I consulted with would more than double.

I hired a full-time chauffeur who could drive me from one client to the next in the course of each day. We used the Lincoln for daily driving from one client to another. I had a special desk made that fit over the transmission hump in the back seat. It had space for a laptop, calculator, notepads and pens, and a drink holder. The chauffeur would pick me up at six a.m. We would typically return to my town home by six or seven p.m.

The chauffeur had a cell phone for business purposes. It was also his job to keep tabs on all the testing that our clients did on their patients. Specifically, he tracked the number of MRI, CT, Doppler, and X-rays. He earned 10% of whatever we earned in testing to keep track of it all. We did thirty-plus MRIs every month. It was new then, but we were paid a substantial fee per referral, per level. You needed to run that business through our sources to be a client.

On the weekends, I would do some paperwork and answer the insurance company's legal refusal to pay notices on behalf of my client back to the insurance carrier.

One of my favorite ways to do this was to sit on the beach on a lovely blanket, with a recorder in one hand and the document I was responding to in the other. On Monday, we would drop off the recordings for transcription, and they would send the letters back to the physician or hospital for signature. Bonus: I could work on my tan.

Having obtained clarity allowed me to focus on what I wanted and how to proceed to get it.

In 1992, my interest in cars came to the forefront. The trigger event was a client offering me a 1990 dark grey Mercedes 300 CE. It had been lowered two inches, and all the windows had very dark tint. Some described it to be a stealth-looking car. I took the car in exchange for fees due.

After I allowed that to happen and my other clients learned about it, I was offered and accepted a 1992 500 SL, a 1991 190 E, and a 1990 Range Rover. All of these cars were black. My "Fleet" stopped expanding with the addition of the Range Rover. I only had a five-car garage under my town home.

Living in Manhattan Beach on Manhattan Beach Boulevard overlooking the pier and the ocean was magical. The sunset looked like something Monet would have painted in the evening sky with the sun melting in the Pacific.

I made arrangements for the three primary restaurants in town to deliver food. I would order off their menu, and they would carry it over to my town home. What impressed

the ladies I was dating was that the restaurants would bring the tablecloth, dishes (not to-go containers), flatware, glasses, and the meal directly to my home. Then they would place everything on the table, and leave. They wouldn't be seen until I called for them to pick up everything and request dessert.

This privilege also came with monthly billing for the food and drink they served. The price was high, but it was impressive and something the women I was dating hadn't seen before.

My lifestyle was lavish, and I treated it with respect. At this time, I also had joint custody of two of my six children. I would allow them all to bring a friend when they visit. That summer, I rented a three-bedroom villa on the beach. My son Steven was well past twenty-one and served as the onsite adult when I worked during the day.

I went to Costco and stocked up on food that could be microwaved, soda, and snacks. They had everything they needed to have the best summer vacation ever.

To this day, they still talk about that week. We all had a great time. As I look back on that occasion, there are so many ways that the week they spent could have gone sideways. So many things that could have happened but didn't.

However, at this age, I have fond memories. That path led me to Margaret. I'm humbled and grateful that it did.

20. THE LOVE OF MY LIFE

My friend Mike had set it up, but I had never met his wife either. I was sitting at the bar when there was a tap was on my shoulder. “DR, you ready to meet her?” “Absolutely,” I said.

Before Mike tapped me, I looked all over the bar in the restaurant where we agreed to meet. I saw one redhead, but she was sitting with an attractive Asian woman. Mike was not Asian, so I didn’t realize they were a couple.

The woman was drop-dead beautiful. She was the right height and build with lovely red hair. As Mike escorted me towards the Asian woman and the redhead, I kept thinking, “There is no way I could get this lucky on a blind date.”

I must have said that multiple times. The next thing I knew, I stood two feet from her, and we shook hands. It was electric. Introductions were made all around, and I was struggling for words for about a minute.

We went to the table and ordered our food, and Margaret and I were just focused on each other. I remember thinking, this is the one. Looking directly at one another, we talked for a long time. We touched on so many topics. She was (and is to this day), so engaging.

We were so focused on one another that Mike leaned across the table and said, “The check is paid. Have a good time. We are leaving.”

We did. We closed the restaurant and then the bar side of the restaurant. We took our conversation out to my car in the parking lot. We talked until 3 a.m. Margaret asked, "*Is this just a one-time thing?*" I said, "No, I want to see you again. I want to talk and get to know you. That's more important than almost anything." She said, "How about I come over to your place tomorrow around Noon?"

When we met the next day, we both agreed that if we found out something or found out that we could not agree or compromise on, we would move on.

At this point, we wanted to avoid making another mistake. Margaret told me she had been married and divorced or annulled twice before she was twenty-one.

She was now thirty-seven. I had been married to my first wife for almost twenty-six years. The second was four months—neither of us wanted to repeat that. We wanted to build a lasting and forever relationship. So we spent the first couple of weeks just getting to know one another from an intellectual perspective.

Once we felt like we understood one another, she was at my home on the beach most of the time. After we had known each other for about three weeks, we called our mutual friend, who introduced us. We said, "OK, we're ready to go off to Las Vegas to get married." He said, "Are you guys idiots or what." I said, "I'm going to go with WHAT because we know each other." He said, "Why don't you wait at least a few months?" Then he sounded like my

Dad from years ago. "Listen, if it's real LOVE, it will still be that way two months from now." He was right.

We met on August 26th, 1994. We couldn't wait any longer, and on September 30, 1994, we drove to Las Vegas and were married on October 1, 1994, by a Justice of the Peace at City Hall in Las Vegas, Nevada.

A side note was that on September 30th, I received a notice that said I was now legally divorced from my second wife. That four months with her was a nightmare. I had put that out of my mind. It was a good thing we waited.

On October 25th, 1994, a friend married us [again] in Margaret's folks home. They had never seen Margaret get married. Three of the kids, Morgan, Cameron, and Katy, came to watch us get married. Margaret's parents passed away thinking that they saw us when we were married in their home. The kids didn't even know it until years later.

Our first year was rocky. We had Cameron, our youngest son, living with us, and we went through more getting to know one another issues. It's similar to what all newlyweds go through.

We finally decided that we couldn't be beaten as a TEAM, not by our six children, business, or anyone else. We still feel that same way.

If you want to know how fantastic Margaret is, think about this. When she married me, she took on six children as a step-mom. They did not know her. At this writing, most of

those children have taken the time to know her. Still, she loves them.

She became a grandmother the following year after we were married. Today, most of our Grandchildren think of us as Nana and Papa. She's the best Nana ever. Yep, it's true. Several of our grandchildren have said so. That absolutely makes it accurate and true.

That twenty-four hours changed my life and gave me the path, direction, and focus I needed.

As of this writing, we've been married for twenty-nine years, working on thirty. I am so committed to Margaret that I would live to be 100 or sooner if she passes. It's a lot of work to stay healthy at this age, but she is absolutely worth it.

I love you, Toots.

21. SANTA CLAUS AND CHRISTMAS

The stories of my life are rich and varied. These stories are what I've shared with people over the years. All the stories I've told others have a way of making one or more points that I hope will benefit the reader or listener.

My Santa years are no different. A family friend had observed how we were struggling after losing it all in the oil business. He was the General Manager at one of the local Country Clubs. He came to me offering \$500 or more for six hours of work on one of the many Saturdays close to the Christmas holiday. My wife found a Santa Suit that she modified and made an elf costume for our oldest son, Steve.

Steve and I worked in this capacity for at least eight years before the suit didn't fit him, and he considered himself too old to be an "elf" passing out candy canes to the children and then the adults in the card room on our way back to the lockers to change. It was now something he didn't want to be part of.

When we began doing this, the money paid for our Christmas. Six children at Christmas is a considerable expense, and like all parents, we wanted to see the joy on their faces at Christmas time.

As Santa, you get to hear the children asking for some of the most precious gifts for them, their siblings, parents, and family members. The children Santa listened to came from some of the wealthiest families in Bakersfield. A few times,

their wealth was obvious in what they wore to “meet Santa.” Or the “Ask” of Santa. Here are some of those requests:

One of the first children on Santa’s knees the very first year asked for a new horse and a jet ski. He asked for them politely, but it was a little hard for Santa to hear. A little girl asked Santa to make Mommy well again that same first year. Having Cancer had changed her Mom.

One little boy asked for a particular game for his Brother. He said, “Santa, he’s a good boy; please get him this.” When Santa asked, “What do you want? He seemed confused. “I just told you, Santa, the game for my Brother.”

Some years, the level of being polite or overzealous was all Santa took away. Santa gave a heartfelt opportunity to request something for themselves or someone they loved.

One year, our friend, the General Manager, asked if I would come by his office about two weeks before Santa was scheduled to appear. He shared the story of a very large family. In all, there were more than twenty-five people. Of these, there were six children under ten years of age.

He was nearly in tears when he told the family’s story and all they had given to the community. The leader and glue that held this large family together was the Grandmother (and a club member). The Grandmother had just passed away the week before, and Christmas was her chance to shine with all of the children, twelve in all.

Every year, she would pass out a handwritten letter and give each child money for whatever they wanted. She also read a couple of stories to the kids after their big Christmas dinner on Christmas eve.

Her son (also a member) told this story with tears in his eyes. He said, "What am I going to do?" He was beside himself. My friend said, "To see this Captain of industry so vulnerable was difficult." He suggested that Santa take the role of the Grandmother, reading and passing out the envelopes. Then Santa could say something inspirational about their Grandmother and this special night.

The General Manager told the member he would take care of everything. So, when I arrived in his office, we brainstormed to put a little mini-program together that would be meaningful for the children and enjoyed by the adults.

The family paid Santa well, but Santa would have done this for FREE. That evening was so inspirational and warm, and Santa fought to hold back the tears. There was never a greater privilege than that evening with this very wonderful family in all the fourteen years of being Santa's helper.

Our oldest son, Steve, then our middle son, Doug, and finally, in the last year of representing Santa, our youngest son, Cameron, as the Elf. Fourteen years after Santa had begun, I quit being Santa. In the last year of Santa, he saw some of the older children he first saw when this privilege began.

Today, that very Santa costume is worn by a Christmas bear that's six feet tall, and his little cub that's three feet tall proudly wears the Elf costume from so many years ago.

In 2019, we had more than 200 people tour our home in the weeks before Christmas. You can see the Christmas pictures taken of our home (DRRawson.com/Christmas) by our photographer friend, Gary Friedman (FriedmanArchives.com).

The spirit of giving and sharing at Christmas time is a miracle in and of itself. It's one of the many miracles of the season. It is *UnLikely* that without Margaret, I would never have had such a rich experience of the joy at Christmas in Grandchildren's eyes as they view our Christmas home.

22. THE LOVE OF CHRISTMAS

At Christmas, we like to have friends, family, and neighbors over for treats and to see our home. The first Christmas after we were married (in 1994), Margaret asked, “Do you enjoy Christmas?” She knew that I did. She also knew that to me, Christmas is so much more than giving or receiving. So, naturally, I said, “Of course.

That first year, we put out some beads and some awful-looking small candles of Santa, Rudolph, and a home with snow on the roof.

Margaret had also uniquely decorated our home with large ornaments hanging from the ceiling. She had also wrapped all the hanging pictures in the home, each with its own Christmas wrapping. Margaret said, “We have a few grandchildren, and I’m sure more will be coming. Can we really dress our home up on the inside and the outside? I would like it to be something that the children will always remember as part of their life.” Well, what could I say? I said, “Yes, let’s do it. *Whatever you want.*”

Today, Christmas decorations take up two full units of off-site large storage units. It’s a total of 140 plus (mostly plus) Rubbermaid totes, many outdoor displays, and more than ten large bags the size of those green trash bags for stuffed toys.

Over the years, we added wood and “old school” blow mold yard art to the mix. These include a life-size Santa,

Santa's sleigh, and all of his reindeer, carolers, and soldiers to guard the area we call Narnia. That area is all white except for one black lamp post with a light. We have more than twenty-two trees in the backyard, all with decorations and lights.

In all, it makes for a really magical experience.

All of this begins in mid-October. Then, we rent a large U-Haul truck, take everything we've packed up in our home, and send it to storage. We take everything in storage and put it into our three-car garage and back yard. It will take Margaret and I six weeks to decorate our home. To this day, we continue to add things to our home.

Most of our decorations are in our home and backyard. However, it's important that every room, closet, garage, and bathroom be decorated. And standing tall will be thirteen Christmas trees inside and outside our home. One of those trees is by our decorated pool with a Christmas array of lights.

No, you can't see our house from the moon, and we certainly don't qualify for any Christmas light display television shows.

We try to capture the magic of Christmas. When we share it with others, the feeling is especially especially strong.

What starts in mid-October is fully decorated before Thanksgiving dinner is served. Everything gets turned on

the first of December. On January 3rd, we start packing everything up. That will take two weeks.

Then, we reverse the process, take Christmas decorations to storage, and gather what goes back in the house to be neatly and typically rearranged. That will take another week.

Christmas is a very special time of the year. We wish you and yours the best Christmas ever.

23. THE ROAD TO BECOMING A MASON

Freemasonry or Masonry refers to a fraternal organization that traces its origins to the local guilds of stonemasons from the end of the 13th century. Then, countries regulated the qualifications of stonemasons and their interaction with authorities and clients. Freemasonry has been the subject of numerous conspiracy theories throughout the years mentioned earlier.

My parents passed away at 42 (Dad) and 44 (Mom). Then, I married and a few years later became a Father myself. Before we had our children, my Brother became our ward, which was a challenge. Who do I turn to for advice, counsel, or help?

My grandfather offered to step in to fill that void. He was one of those men who didn't say much, but you instinctively knew you should listen carefully when he did. He said, "I will gladly help; I'm honored to be able to do so. I have one reservation. Do not ever ask me to tell you what to do." I thought about that for a few minutes and said, "Wait, doesn't that negate the whole reason why I'm coming to you?" "Not at all," he said. "I'm going to teach you the things you need to know. Once introduced, it will be up to you to apply what I taught you to your problem," he said with a smile. I said, "Yeah, I think I can do that."

Over the years, I may not have done things like he or anyone else would. I did, however, apply the principles and values he taught me. Some twenty years later, my grandfather, now eighty-seven years old and a widower,

called and asked if I would pick him up in Las Isabella. He wanted me to drive him down to Bakersfield, California. He wanted to be at the same hospital that had done his heart bypass surgery. "Of course," I said. "Are you ready now?" "Yes, I am." He said, "I'll be there in forty minutes." "No rush," he said.

I thought, why do you want to go to the hospital? But I learned long ago that Grandpa didn't do anything without a purpose. So, "I'll be there . . ." was the absolute correct answer.

He grabbed a small bag and stepped into my car. After some small talk, I asked, "Why do you feel the need to go to the hospital?"

He only said, "I need to." Well, that was good enough for me. Grandpa had worked most of his life in a noisy environment in the sugar plant. He was the head of maintenance when the connection between a motor and delivering power to the item being driven by the motor was flat leather belts. The leather belt would slap in the middle if the driver and the driving distance were too great. This means the top piece of leather would bang up against the bottom, creating a "slap" that was a real rhythm. It was loud, and you can imagine fifty or more machines all doing this. It was quite literally deafening.

Since I was a boy, I would ask Grandpa something, and Grandma would answer. I never understood why until I was grown and married. These slapping belts reduced my grandfather's ability to hear much of anything. I taught my

children to speak up around Grandpa. I had offered to buy him hearing aids, and my Grandmother said flatly, "It won't make a bit of difference." I didn't think about that until a few years later after my Grandmother died of a heart attack at age seventy-seven. She passed away the week after our youngest son was born. After we buried Grandma, we all went to visit Grandpa about three weeks after her death. He couldn't wait to show all of us his new hearing aids. They worked great!

After that, my grandfather was not himself at all. Suddenly, he found his voice and was just shy of being one of those chatty Kathy dolls, always talking.

On our trip to the hospital, Grandpa was unusually talkative. It was clear he had a lot to say about many things. However, when it came to his thoughts **of me**, he said, "Will you become a Mason?" I asked why I would need to do that. He said, "You know all of those principles and values we've discussed over the years? Well, there are two sources of wisdom (from my point of view). The first is the Old and New Testament, and the second is the thirty-two degrees of Masonry (the thirty-third is honorary for years of service).

After that explanation, how could I refuse? He told me where his Masonic Bible edition was in his home. I'm now starting to worry. Not knowing or understanding what it takes or the process, I agreed I would.

I was able to get him settled into his room. I was running an oilfield repair company then and needed to

return to work. The following day, I woke to the ringing of my home phone. Who calls at 4, I thought. "Mr. Rawson, this is (someone) from the hospital." Your GrandFather's taken a turn for the worse. I rushed to the hospital alone. I could see Grandpa was not doing well. He was so weak that he couldn't sit up.

I scooped him up and into my arms. He looked like he was dying. He looked at me intently and said a few things to me about his passing and who should be contacted. Then he said the most important words of all (for me to hear). He said, "Will you become a Mason?" I said, "YES." Then he said, "I love you." He passed away in my arms while we were looking into each other's eyes.

When Margaret and I spent so much time looking for ease and compatibility, I asked her if she was OK with me becoming a Mason, and I told her this story. She said, "I'm good with that." I still had no idea what that entailed, and Margaret said nothing else.

In our first year of marriage, I had been thinking about being Mason. I wanted to give it a go and told Margaret my desire. She said, "Why not call my Dad? He's been a Mason all my life. He's also a leader in the organization."

Could it be that easy? No, it wasn't. I called Dad (I called him Dad; he was the only Dad I ever had as an adult); I said, "Hey, Dad, Margaret said you can help me achieve my goal of becoming a Mason." He said, "Why do you want to be a Mason?" I told him the story you've just read about

my grandfather. He said, "Great. I'll get an application over to you. A few weeks passed, and I called him again. Again, he said he'd "bring it over."

It would be another few weeks, and finally, I called him and said, "Let me ask you a question, Dad. Why don't you want me to be a Mason?" He said, "How long will you be home this afternoon (Saturday)?" I said, "I'm not going anywhere." He said, "Stay there." He only lived twenty minutes away from us. He drove right over.

I filled out an application, and Dad and his best friend Dave signed the application with me. They also wanted to review my application and check with those who underwrote me. It took about three months. Every week, I traveled from Garden Grove, California, to Grand Prairie (where my business was located), Texas (near Dallas), and it took a lot of work to connect with my trainer.

Before long, I had memorized my work to become a Master Mason (the first three degrees).

It was now September, and a fast class was coming up at the Al Malaikah Shrine Temple in Los Angeles. One Saturday, I would join the Long Beach Scottish Rite (the University of Masonry) and the El Bekal Shriner's organization in Anaheim, CA. The entertaining part of Masonry is supporting more than 15 children's orthopedic and Burn hospitals in the U.S., where care is provided for FREE.

As you've read, becoming a Mason was important to me. Tradition, sure, but education and comradery were just as important. We can all relate to shared feelings and understanding from a common experience. High School, College, and the Military all have that in common.

The largest bump in membership within Masonry occurred after World War II and the Korean War. Having served myself, I can tell you that the military shared experience is a huge pull when you're in a foxhole with bullets whizzing overhead of you and your buddies. You build an unshakable bond. After these wars, men missed that bond. Masonry was the answer.

My Father-in-law (Dad) was stationed in Guam. To hear him tell it, there had been so much of the Island bombed that there was nothing left except his outpost and the vast tunnel network built underground by the Japanese. Every day, your life was in jeopardy.

When he returned, he went to work like everyone else, looking for the American Dream—a relative of his introduced Dad to Masonry. In 1955, in the old Hollywood lodge across from Grumman's Chinese theatre, he became a Master Mason. Dad was a hale, hearty, and well-met kind of guy. He was a salesman selling asphalt.

When he joined, the membership in California was around 100,000. In 1981, he became the Shrine Potentate (head of the organization) for Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties. At that time, there were 89,000 (roughly)

members. Today, there's less than 30,000. Someone said the times they are changing.

Today, all fraternal organizations have decreased membership. That also includes the Rotary, Kiwanis, and many other community service clubs. The competition for time is huge. From then, in the 50s, there were fewer demands on one's time. Today, the Internet has a great deal to do with the decline.

A Potentate only serves for one year. In that year, he accomplished a great deal. Today, people in Shrine still know who Preston Jones from Long Beach was. All miss him.

My journey through Masonry was different than Dad's.

The Scottish Rite would give me all mandatory degrees between the 4th and 32nd. This would enable me to go on and a 32° Mason just as my grandfather was. Margaret's Dad was a 33° Mason. I was eventually selected to be in the Knight Commander's Court of Honor (K.C.C.H.) for my work to promote the Scottish Rite. I was a member (with Dad) of the Long Beach Scottish Rite, where some of the most famous Masons of our time were also members.

These included Tom Mix, Audi Murphy, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and John Wayne. The membership also included set designers, carpenters from the movie industry, makeup artists, costumers, and so much more.

Nearly every Scottish Rite Body has a clinic for children who suffer from aphasia^[3]. Children are treated for FREE

regardless of their ability to pay. There are more than 1,600 clinics in the United States and one Hospital in Dallas.

The Scottish Rite uses the "play" medium to teach its principles and values. Men in period costumes represent each "play," and each teaches more than one principle to be learned and commits to its adherence personally.

Dad was Chairman of the Clinic Board for nearly 10 years. I was privileged to serve with him for five of those years. Dad served as the Robing Room Director for twenty-five years. I was privileged to be his assistant for twelve years.

In the year 2000, the S.G.I.G. for California asked me to study all of the Scottish Rite in California. He wanted to know what changes the Brethren needed from the Scottish Rite. The report was titled *FreeMasonry Into The Future*. It was a forward-thinking 45-page report.

This is a Fraternal organization. NO women. Before we became Freemasons, we were stonemasons. Few women were working outside the home in the 13th century.

Why Secret? If you and I are friends and you want to tell me something about you that you don't want others to know, you ask me to keep your secret. You may even suggest that if I violate the bond we share, there will be a monetary or physical price to pay. I agree.

Masons learn many principles and values. We learn them in a setting similar to when the principles were first

agreed upon in the 13th, 17th, or even the 20th century. I agree with the principle and further agree with its consequences.

Someone keeping a secret does not make them evil. However, it makes them wise as they learn these organizations' principles and values.

Are you a fellow traveler?

24. HEALTHCARE FOR ELEVEN YEARS

My good friend told me, “My Orthopedic practice will barely make \$500,000 this year. I said, “Really?” Then I ask the more important question, “How much should it make?” He said, “It made \$1,000,000 last year.”

I don’t care who you are or what you do; losing 50% of your income means you’re in trouble. So, I asked, “How about other physicians? Are they losing money, too? He said, “YES.” There was a sort of desperation in my friend’s voice. I asked, “How can I be helpful?”

He said, “I’m seeking help because I respect your business acumen. Would you be willing to meet with a few of us and we can go into more detail.” “Sure,” I said. And, with that, we set a meeting.

When I entered the conference room, I expected three or four people besides me. Instead, there were more than twenty people in the room. My friend made the introductions, and then, one by one, each told their own horror story. After that, my friend said, “*Can you help us?*”

“Honestly, I didn’t know,” I said. Other than occasionally going to the Doctor myself, I had no knowledge from which I could give them anything right now. So I asked for a week, and we would reconvene. They all agreed.

I had just left the CEO position of an oil company that manufactured products, repaired and maintained wells for

others, and enjoyed some production for itself. So, what these men and women were asking of me was daunting. But, hey, I like a significant challenge.

Several market factors were chief at that time: Bakersfield only has two industries. They are farming and oil. If one or, God forbid, both become recessionary for any reason, real people will suffer. So many companies were hanging on.

When I began my research, I found that most of these physicians were doing fee-for-service work. The model PPO and HMO had yet to be offered. I discovered that there was a co-pay in combination with the fee-for-service and, later, the PPO model. So, people weren't using physicians because they would have to pay a co-pay they didn't have.

With so many businesses also losing money, if the Doctors and Hospitals forgave the co-pay, people would go. Additionally, if I could get grocery stores, tire shops, movie theaters, gas stations, and others to offer a discount, businesses, specifically these and other physicians, would enjoy more business.

When we met again, I shared this plan with the Doctors. In the process of sharing, one of the Doctors within my proximity said, "That sounds like a PPO to me." I didn't know that.

My plan was straightforward. I would charge every physician \$100 per month, every hospital \$300 per month, and every other type of business \$100 per month. Everyone

in the room agreed. I asked that we meet again in two weeks.

In two weeks, I created a company called **Human Services**. All of the service providers went under that umbrella. I created all the paperwork and marketing materials, but I realized that it would only move slowly if we could get massive advertising without any money. It would be profitable for me instantly. However, my clients were the most important element. So, this was the plan.

A friend of mine was the General Manager at the local TV station, an ABC affiliate. I went to him and appealed to his communications charter criteria. They needed to provide several hours of on-air community service. I convinced them that **Human Services** was offering community service. They agreed to create a 30-second TV spot to promote **Human Services** to all employers and employees. They also agreed to run it randomly or when an advertiser canceled. All of this would be at no charge.

In the first month, it ran hundreds of times. Everyone knew my face since I was the featured speaker in the ad.

Employers could offer the **Human Services** package to employees for **\$14.50** per family. An unemployed family could also buy from Human Services for the same price. Our plan would allow them to have the co-pay forgiven, receive discounts on the real things they buy daily, and more. The first 30 days after we opened this up to employers and individuals, we enrolled 1,450 plus families.

At the end of the 4th month (30 days after we started selling), a major healthcare provider came along and offered to take over the network and, in its place, leave a nice check with quite a few zeros. LOL, that's the Moment I realized that there was a lot of money in healthcare.

I decided that Southern California would be a better place than Bakersfield to start a healthcare consulting company. I name it **Monet Medical**. The tagline was, "*Monet had a vision of what art should be; our vision is for healthcare.*" There was just one problem. I didn't know anything about consulting with a Doctor or a Hospital. So, to learn, I thought if I charged **\$35.00** (1987) an hour until I learned from them, it would work. It did not work. I couldn't get hired to wash windows.

Then, one day, I walked into an AMI Hospital, and Michael, the Administrator, had an open-door policy for new vendors (to the hospital). I waited about fifteen minutes, and he came out to greet me. We went into his office.

"What ya got?" Eager, I thought, I like that. I explained how he could increase his daily census (a count of everyone staying overnight in the hospital) by three or more percent per month. He said, "That's bold. Are you sure it will work?" I said, "I will stake my fee on it." He said, "Good transition; what are the terms?" "My fee (I decided to swing for the fence) is **\$2,000** monthly. And if any of the physicians I meet with decide to hire me on your behalf, the fee is all mine." "Well, I guess my only question is how much time do I get per month?" I said, "Three hours. If I don't improve your bottom line by at least three percent monthly (from the

established base), you don't pay me." He said, "That sounds like a win-win for us." "Exactly," I said."

That exchange allowed my company to take off. Within six months, I was consulting to twenty physicians, three hospitals, and one law firm. I needed more office space. When I approached the third hospital, they said, "We don't have a need; we're decommissioning and provide very specific care for people with severe arthritis."

The Administrator showed me their brand new book to assist patients. I looked at it and realized that their patients would never read the book because they couldn't even turn the pages. I showed him how the heal of the hand from any patient could turn the pages if after the book was printed, they would cut the pages on the right side at a forty-five-degree angle. The Administrator said, "Brilliant. Wow, you're good."

He said, "We have an entire wing (of an old-style, single-story hospital) that's not being used. There are sixteen patient rooms and a nurse's station. We will exchange your marketing talent for FREE rent and use of the phone system for that wing. Only one stipulation. If we need the wing and have to terminate our agreement with you, we should be able to turn the rooms into patient rooms within a day."

Each room had a bathroom, space for two beds, and a great view of the San Fernando Valley. The wing also had its own private entrance. In appreciation, they agreed to put purple heart wood blinds on every window, mauve carpeting in every room, and two telephones per room.

My son Cameron and I made oak tiles to replace some of the drop ceiling tiles in the center of each room. Then, we hung a crystal chandelier in the middle of each room. We also made a false oak wall that would stand alone one foot in front of the wall with all of the air supply, vales, connections, etc. Then we built a large conference table for one room that could also be used as a desk. The decorated space could be described as French Colonial. Finally, my wife made the curtains for each room.

The nurse's station was perfect for a front desk and an assistant to answer the phone.

Our business grew to include billing for the fifty-six physicians we represented to insurance companies. The companies would order workers' compensation evaluations. One of our contracted physicians would provide the evaluation, and then we would bill the insurance company and receive forty percent of the total. That was our marketing fee. When the law and the business model changed, we were up to one hundred to one hundred twenty-five monthly evaluations.

We settled in on all things workers' compensation. Soon, I was consulting, lecturing, teaching, and providing legal work for hospitals, physicians, and larger clinics. We also developed a Monet intake center at select hospitals to see Workers' Compensation patients for the first time. In those days, you didn't have to have a law degree to represent clients or patients on Workers' Compensation issues.

This business worked great from 1991 until late 1993. At that time, the Workers' Compensation laws changed dramatically. California decided to adopt the Texas model. An Orthopedic evaluation went from \$850 to \$350. A Psych evaluation went from \$2,000 to \$1,400 each.

Shortly after the "big change" occurred, a Southern California hospital near Watts asked me to consult with the Board of Directors. Ultimately, they asked that I find them a new President for the hospital. That was easy. The COO's name was Majorie, and she was a retired Colonel from the Marine Corps. She started as a nurse. She was great at what she did. Brilliant even.

I was convinced that she was the person for the job and then convinced the Board to get over their ideas about a woman leading an organization. The Board relented and gave me the honor of telling the COO that she was the new President effective immediately and that the Board of Directors was waiting to hear from her in the conference room.

She addressed the Board. Once again, Brilliant. Then she said, with your permission, I'd like to continue to retain DR Rawson as our COO until a suitable and satisfactory replacement can be found. The Board instantly approved.

After the meeting, I told her that I might not have suggested it to her if I had known I would have to serve as the interim COO.

I was COO for a week when our independent ER physicians went on strike. They refused to work without an extended contract and a raise. So yeah, I knew being the COO would be a problem. It was the worst three months as a consultant ever!

A friend from Texas found me in Southern California. He had a Novel DB (database) accounting system for hospitals. It was a more effective outsourced solution for medical billing.

He wanted me to build it, and we did, with Clients across the country and in Texas. We provided everything after the bill dropped (generated). We had everything digitized and were using people who were willing to work from home to bill and collect. The phone was one of the first spoke and hub units in the Dallas metroplex. Whoever was available, the system would then call them next.

Then I partnered with an insurance company in Kansas to buy and sell physicians to organizations that owned and then contracted the physicians. We would pay the price, they would pay us more, and then my partner and I would sell the practice.

We purchased a split-dollar insurance policy allowing them to take up to 42% of what they made and withdraw it within the first year. We made money coming and going, but the physical and emotional toll was too high.

Our marriage was rock solid even though I was headed all over America all week long, then back to Dallas. Margaret

started coming to Dallas every other weekend. That made what I was doing much more palatable. However, a year after it had begun, I promised Margaret I would get out of that business.

I thought I'd retire for a bit, make our home even

nicer, and take an inventory of what was happening in the market.

I created the [virtual.net](#), providing consulting services on technology to healthcare clients in Southern California.

25. MILLION DOLLAR CONSULTING

One of the orthopedic surgeons I worked for asked me to negotiate with the hospital to bring on another orthopedic surgeon to grow his practice.

The job description was an Orthopedic Surgeon wanted for a practice poised to double in the coming year. With that, the Hospital searched for Orthopedists at other practices in other states. Finally, they found a good fit.

The man they found was Jewish and 5ft. 9in. On a good day. When he arrived at the practice door, he was wearing a light blue and white striped seersucker, two-button coat, unshined shoes, and the greatest head of black curly hair you've ever seen.

He wore a pre-made bow tie and a white button-down shirt that gapped between buttons. He drove in from his home state of New York to begin working with my client. His vehicle looked like it barely made it. As you can read from this description, he was not impressive as a person or a Doctor.

Let's talk about education and training. our new doctor, Dr. Hillel, had a photographic memory. He received his MD at the age of twenty-one. He was a teaching intern, and when he started his fellowship in hands, he was a teaching fellow. He also did fellowships for the back, hands, and neurology. He was Board Certified in Orthopedics and Neurology.

Once he arrived, he went to work seeing patients while also waiting for hospital privileges. The problem was that he couldn't book surgery. Let's face it; no one wants a young kid working on your back. It's very important.

Not long ago, I experienced the need for another stint. This time, it would go on the backside of my heart. I was sent to a Cardiologist who was familiar with this operation. He looked a bit young, so I asked questions about his residency and fellowship. He did his fellowship with the Doctor who developed the procedure. However, he was only thirty-three. He had done more than 1,000 of these procedures. I felt very comfortable with him, and the surgery was a success.

There was a big reason why Dr. Hillel couldn't book surgery. It's called the *Law of Congruence*. If this law is not adhered to, it will severely limit your ability to succeed.

So, in this case, the Orthopedic Surgeon was striking out during his first four days of seeing patients. My original client told him to see DR, and he'll know what to do.

Reluctantly, he showed up at my office about 10 a.m. He said, "Dr. Frank told me you could help me book surgeries." I said, "I believe I can if you'll answer a few questions I have about you." He said, "That depends on the question (The chip on his shoulder had a sign on it; people without an MD don't tell MDs what to do.)

"Dr. Hillel, why did you want to become a physician?" You could see he was stunned and agitated that someone who isn't a Doctor would ask him that question. So, failing to answer that question, I asked the second question. "How much money are you expecting to make in gross receipts your first year?" He quickly fired back. "That's not any of your business." Then he walked out, saying, "I knew this would be another waste of my time."

Lunchtime came and went, and by two p.m., he was back in my office. As he barged through the door, I was already in a meeting with the regional representative of one of California's largest Workers' Compensation carriers. He said, "I need to talk with you now." So I told my guest, "Please excuse me for a minute or two. Dr. Hillel and I will take this out into the hall. I'll be right back."

I told Dr. Hillel, "Listen, Bud, I don't work for you. Consequently, you don't get to treat me like I waste your time. Are you ready to answer my questions?" "NO," he said. So I said, "O.K., please understand that I'm leaving at 4:30 pm today and that the opportunity to help you is a "today only" offer. Hopefully, we'll talk later."

Dr. Hillel went on about the business of trying to get surgeries. I went back to talking about insurance patients. One of the most challenging things about working with ANY physician is their belief that they are the most intelligent person in the room unless you're another physician; their attitude is that you can't possibly be my equal.

At 4:15 p.m., there was a knock on my closed door. I said, "Please enter." I said, "Please sit down and sit back and relax." Dr. Hillel said, "I'm sorry about my actions today. The information you requested isn't typically shared with people in your capacity. But I'm ready to answer all your questions, honestly."

"I became a Doctor to earn a lot of money while doing something that will benefit others." "Excellent; how much money do you want to earn in your first year? He said, "Dr. Frank tells me that because of you, his business has grown substantially and that you have negotiated a great contract with the Hospital." I said, "That's very kind of him, but I'm merely a facilitator."

I asked again, "Tell me, Dr. Hillel, how much do you want to make?" He said, "One million dollars." I said, "Great, now that we've cleared that up. . . "

Final question: I said, "How much do you know about Healthcare Marketing, and if I give you the answer you're looking for, when are you prepared to execute the plan?"

He shined with this answer. He said, "I've done some checking on you. You were once the CEO of a large company, and you've done that for several companies that had grown quite large when you cashed out. "I'm prepared to do what you want when you want me to do it as long as I can clearly see or understand what you want to do." I said, "that's not just the right answer, it's a great answer."

With his answer, I said, "What are you doing this evening?" He said, "As it happens, nothing that can't be changed if you want me to." I responded, "I do because we have much to do before tomorrow morning." And with that, I picked up the phone, called Nordstrom's Concierge, and asked for a private appointment for men's clothes. They asked if we could come now?" I said, "YES, it will take us twenty-five minutes to get there."

When we arrived, we were escorted to a separate men-only area. In the room were three very comfortable club chairs, a six-inch riser in front of a 3-way mirror, and a tailor's stand with measuring tape, pins, chalk, and some bits of black thread.

I told the Tailor, "Please bring out a 38 regular center vent suit in black, blue, pinstripe, and grey. a blue double-breasted pinstriped suit and a double-breasted blue sport coat with brass buttons." "Right away, Sir," he said.

For the next hour and a half, Dr. Hillel tried on everything we asked of him, and I made the selections. We also looked at pants, shirts, ties, shoes, and underwear. At one point, Dr. Hillel said, "I'm guessing that neither you nor the practice will be paying for these clothes. Am I right?" I said, "Yes, you are."

We bought several thousands of dollars worth of clothing. They completed a blue pinstriped suit with an English 3.5 in. collar that would allow for a collar pin under the knot and a red tie for the next day's clothes to wear.

The other suits would be finished tailoring within two days' time. After thanking the kind people at Nordstrom, I took him to a men's salon. I knew the owner. I suggested that we take his curly Afro curls down to something more clean cut. The same but neatly tailored.

The following day, as instructed, Dr. Hillel arrived and went through the front doors of our busy practice. I had instructed the front desk staff to say, "Good morning, Dr. Hillel." He replied, "Hello, Ladies, everyone, good this morning?" And he lingers at the counter for a moment, then proceeds through the door to the exam room and executive offices.

As instructed, he went directly to Dr. Frank's office. "Yep, Rawson's done it again. Dr. Frank said what you're wearing and how you look is perfect."

Dr. Hillel was almost immediately called in for consultation, and he went in to examine a woman in her sixties in horrible back pain. He sent her for an X-ray and, upon further examination, determined that she needed surgery. Dr. Hillel asked, "Would you like our staff schedule the surgery for you?" The patient said, "Yes, please." It was a **\$40,000** booking.

After several more booking success stories the same day, Dr. Hillel knocked on my office door and popped in. "How did you know?" he said. I said, "Dr. Hillel, you've just been introduced to the *Law of Congruency*. When you and your surroundings are a match or are in sync, they (the patients) will feel comfortable with you determining their course of

action. Congratulations." I said. He said, "Thank you for being patient with me." "You're very welcome," I said.

Dr. Hillel worked for Dr. Frank. His gross bookings for the first year were nearly \$1,000,000. It was close enough to call it a win. I was able to market him to the insurance community as a doctor specializing in previously failed back surgeries. Patients came from across the country and even the Middle East for his services.

After six months with Dr. Frank, he worked with a design firm to create his new offices. It was from the Art Deco period or reproductions from that time. Between the way he always (after that) dressed and his office, there was NO DOUBT that he was an excellent, successful surgeon.

26. THE NOW FAMOUS DR. LICHTENSTEIN

In a meeting of physicians that the Beverly Hills Hospital sponsored, a Doctor approached me and said, "Do you believe in lost causes?" I said, "I don't believe in the concept of a lost cause unless I've first reviewed the situation.

I'm known as a Possibilist. He said, "I know you are, and that's why I've researched what you've done for others." I said, "Dr. Lichtenstein, I'm always up for a challenge." He said, "Can we meet for lunch (on me) tomorrow at 11:30 a.m.?" I checked my schedule and said, "sure."

At our lunch, he said, 'May I tell you about my life's work?' "Please," I said. "At one time, I was a tenured professor at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles); since my time in WWII, I've asked myself if there could be better wound care. At that time, General Surgeons were charging a high price for hernia repair. Curiously enough, those operations wouldn't last and they would have to redo the work."

Dr. L said, "I remember we were poor kids growing up in the Bronx in New York. We would play out on the city streets. It didn't take long for us to wear a hole in the knee of our pants. Mom used to fold over the edges and then sew this awkward "row of stitching. Once there was a hole, the

patch would never last more than a few days." I asked, "So, what did she do?"

"Mom would take a pair of jeans that wasn't usable because the holes in the knees were too large and cut a patch from the good material. She would round the corners of the patch, lay it over the holes, and then do a whip stitch around the patch that was larger than the tear. Eventually, the patch would wear out like the original pants had done. But it lasted so much longer," he said.

He continued, "Then I considered how we typically repair a hernia today. It was not unlike the old patch Mom used to use to repair our pants. I looked for material that could be placed over the hole (hernia) and then tightly stitched along the edge covering the hole. In this way, the solution was as strong or stronger than the original piece of the abdominal wall. There was less time in recovery, and a patient could go home, run, jump, high dive, or even golf without the fear of tearing open the surgical patch."

Then, what happened? I asked. He said, "Other general surgeons demanded my head. They convinced UCLA to drop me as a professor. I singlehandedly pushed for the adoption of this procedure. The mesh manufacturer promoted me and would send me places to teach this unique repair. Once micro surgery came into place, we didn't even have to open the abdomen, thus eliminating the possibility of infection and dramatically improving the recovery rate.

The surgery could then be done on an outpatient basis. It was then that Surgeons worldwide began sending me

letters of congratulations. Now, I was hailed as a hero. Ultimately, the mesh that was created for the hernia would be used for other purposes. The body readily accepted the material, and as time passed, the body's healing process incorporated the mesh seamlessly. “

He went on to ask me to manage the practice. After reviewing the financials, I agreed to do it for a fee. I could renegotiate material costs, hospital use, and even doctors' salaries. Within one year, the clinic was thriving. More and more insurance companies were demanding this type of hernia repair.

27. THE .COM BOOM

The [virtual.net](#) was timed right and poorly applied. Margaret saw (from the phone bill) that I was spending an inordinate amount of time and money on the phone. She asked, “What are you doing for these people on the phone?” I said, “Many of them are trying to figure out where their company’s future will be with the .com era.” She asked, “Are you invoicing them for your services?”

I said, “These people are my friends.” She said, “So, it’s O.K. for your friends to make money but not you?” She had a valid point.

A friend pointed me towards a pair of companies run by the same person, and he was in over his head. He set up a meeting for us. He explained what they were doing and how they were raising capital. Frankly, I freaked out. Mistakes like these are what send CEOs to prison.

The guy who had come up with the business model had yet to learn how to start, run, and grow a company. I put certain safeguards into place to protect me and asked for stock and salary commensurate with a much larger company.

He and his CFO decided that I would be a great fit and had what it would take to carry this company across the finish line. I would be the CEO with a 30% stock ownership position. The individual who came up with the model and was its President. He would now be the Vice President of

advertising. We put everything in writing, signed it, and shook hands.

His Sister was running an illegal SEC sales operation out of a portion of the warehouse. I let her and the ten people she hired go. She did not have any SEC credentials, Series five or seven.

The man who started the company said, "You're fired." The CFO said, "If you fire him, the rest of the people here quit. It's your call. He backed down.

I hired an old friend of mine to be my SEC Compliance Officer. He had both series five and seven licenses.

Mostly, I was busy running companies instead of dreaming up solutions. I nearly missed the opportunity. The product was called the "Qbe."

28. UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

A neighbor of mine had worked with an inventor on the very first automobile anti-theft device.

The parts and instructions for installing the switch were in one attractive box. It cost less than \$3.00 to manufacture, and we sold it to dealerships for \$35.00, and they sold it for \$75.00 installed.

This is a classic case of unintended consequences. We intended to provide vehicle owners with a real way to stop thieves from taking and using their cars. Unfortunately, the switch was installed in some place not obvious. When the owner stepped out of the car, they turned the switch to OFF. Consequently, the only fuel the vehicle had to drive off with was in the line between the fuel cutoff switch and the carburetor.

The thief would drive off, and the car ran out of gas before they had gone one-half mile. The theory is that no thief would push it to a gas station and try to fill it up. If they did, it still wouldn't start. It's very doubtful they'd call AAA.

However, there were instances of the thief making a left-hand turn in front of the opposing traffic. A few of those could have gone better for the thief, the vehicle, and its passengers. Or the vehicle that had just stopped in the middle of the road.

The courts issued a cease and desist order. And, just like that, a product that showed such great promise was removed forever from our collective automobile history.

The real lesson here is that for every action, there are both intended and unintended consequences. Therefore, it's always best to identify both before proceeding.

EXHIBITS

The List of Businesses That I've Started, Purchased, or Taken Over 55 Years

1. Author - Books, articles, stories, and blog posts
2. PureAire Technology - Henderson, NV
3. For The Benefit of Others Charitable Philanthropic Effort – Henderson, NV
4. Philanthropic Effort in CA, then the U.S., and then Globally – the United States and 55+ other countries
5. Website Development – Garden Grove, CA
6. Ornamental Iron and Steel Fabrication – Boulder City, NV
7. Casualty Insurance Underwriting – Costa Mesa and Santa Ana, CA
8. Consulting to Insurance Brokers, Garden Grove, CA
9. Internet Service Provider (ISP), Santa Ana, CA
10. Computer Company producing touchpad computers – Santa Ana, CA
11. Satellite Telecommunications – Garden Grove, CA and Houston, TX
12. Consulting to the Telecommunications (cellular) Industry – Garden Grove, CA
13. Medical Technology Consulting Company – Garden Grove, CA
14. Consulting to Startup Companies looking for seed or operating capital – Garden Grove, CA
15. Medical Collection Company – Encino and Grand Prairie, TX
16. Medical Collections for Hospitals – Manhattan Beach, CA
17. Medial Back Testing Company – Chatsworth, CA

18. Medical Billing for Workers' Compensation Patients in Hospitals, Encino, CA
19. Medical Consulting to Physicians, Chiropractors, Clinics, Hospitals and Clinics, Chatsworth, CA
20. Human Services Company providing healthcare and other Services to employees – Bakersfield, CA
21. Owned and operated an oilfield in Duncan, OK
22. Manufacturer of downhole oil pumps – Bakersfield, CA
23. Oilfield tools, compressor, and pump repair facility – Bakersfield, CA
24. Manufacturer's Representative – Pumps & Compressors – Los Angeles, CA
25. Advertising Agency – East Los Angeles, CA
26. Printing Company – Los Angeles, CA
27. Marketing Consultant to the Steel Industry – Provo, UT, and Monroe, WA
28. Advertising and Public Relations Agency – Los Angeles, CA
29. Overhead Lifting Equipment Company – Los Angeles, CA
30. Plumbing Wholesaler – Tampa, FL
31. Automobile Reseller, Tacoma, WA
32. Automobile Detailing – Tacoma, WA

Before turning 21 years of age:

1. Automobile Detailing – Bell, CA
2. Card Room Janitorial Services, El Cajon, CA
3. Shoe Shining – La Mirada and San Diego, CA
4. 3 Paper routes at the same time La Mirada, CA

EXTRAS

SELLING CARS

The dealership where I worked was shaped like the building the Boston Symphony uses for its concerts. It was narrow at the back with 12 ft ceilings for offices. In the front of the building, the height of the building was more than 40 ft. The walls to the sides and in the front were all glass. The floor was a hard surface. When there were no prospects, the “sales band” took over. It was complete with a lead singer. The acoustics were perfect.

I would play the trumpet or trombone using just my mouth (very much like beatbox today). Our drummer used fenders, doors, and trunk lids for percussion, and our guitar player was a real guitar player. We would cover songs from the bands of the time.

Whenever a prospect walked through the door, it was like it never happened.

On one occasion, it was about 2 p.m. in the afternoon when a young man in fatigues with a Spec four insignia on his uniform (enlisted E4 rank) walked through our front door. Since I was the only one in the entire building who had been or was in the military, the “up” was mine by default.

I approached the young man, and we hit it off, talking about rank, Ft. Lewis, etc. He said, “I have a few questions about Jaguars.” I said, “That’s a favorite subject of mine.

That's mine over there." It was a burgundy convertible E Type with a tan top and interior. We walked over to it. I pointed out some of the car's features, etc. He said, "Can you get this in yellow." "Yes, but it will have a black canvas top," I said. His response was, "Can I see it?" "It's at the docks in Seattle," I replied. "Oh, okay," He said.

"May I ask, does the Jaguar Sedan come in that Hunter Green?" "Yes, it does; we have one at the docks in Seattle," I said. Then he asked, "On the sedan, can the seat be moved forward so that a driver that is 4 ft 9 in fit and drive comfortably?" I was pleased to say, "It would take an extra day before delivery. We would take the seat out, re-drill the holes for mounting, move the track, and then replace the seat. That's why we would need an extra day."

He said, "Will you be working this evening after dinner?" I said, "Yes, I will." He said, "I'll be back this evening to discuss this further." As he left, I said, "Great, I'll see you then." He arrived with his wife on his arm and mother-in-law in tow. The women were wearing full-length (probably Mink) coats and warm hats. He wore a bespoke blue trench coat over a magnificent double-breasted blue pin striped suit with a white shirt. He also wore a hat.

He recognized me from afar (as all the salespeople on duty were walking towards him) and called out my name. "Hello, Doc. Good to see you again. May I introduce you to my Mother-in-law and this is my beautiful (and she was) wife." I said, "Ladies, it is a pleasure to meet you." "How may I be helpful?" I said.

“We’d like to buy both of those Jaguars we discussed earlier today.” I said, “Great, let’s go into my office, and I’ll draw up the paperwork.” We all walked over to my little sales office. I commandeered an extra chair so the three could sit comfortably in front of my desk. “Before we start, can I get anyone a coffee, a glass of water, or perhaps a soda from the vending machine in our break room?” They each took coffee.

I asked all the questions I needed to and completed the necessary paperwork. Then I asked the closing question. I said to him, “The total is. . . how would you like to pay for it.? At which point, the Mother-in-law who had been pretty silent said, “We’ll pay by check. Is that acceptable?” “Of course, please make it out to the name of our dealership.” She had just filled in the date when she asked, “Is the check the same as cash for this purpose?” I said, “Yes, it is.” “Can I get a discount for Cash?” “You absolutely will; we give a 2% discount for cash.” The adjusted total before tax and license will then be . . .” “Wonderful,” She said.

She made out her check, and I took the check and the paperwork to the General Manager for approval. The total was way above the Sales Manager’s ability to approve. He said, “What do you have, Rawson.” I said, “I believe that once you’ve approved of the deal, I’ve sold two Jaguars.” “Two,” he said. He looked at the paperwork and check, then looked up at me and said, “Do you know who these people are.” I said, “Of course, they are my customers.” He nervously laughed and said, “This woman is one of the wealthiest women in town. Her husband owned a sawmill, and most of the lumber to build this town came from that

mill.” He quickly put his initials in the appropriate place and said, “Great job [again].”

It is highly *UnLikely* that I would meet someone and make a sale of this magnitude were it not for very simple laws. Don’t ever judge a book by its cover. Don’t ever assume facts, not in evidence. Treat everyone with respect.

In 1966, my commission was nearly \$1,000. In today’s terms, that would be more than \$8,000 in purchasing power today. How’s that for a reward for not pre-judging?

TECHNOLOGY

A close friend of mine shared the story of the 10 Mb tape storage drive.

Computers like recording devices used to be “reel-to-reel” and were mounted onto the computer. Information was stored much like a hard drive. The amount of data that can be stored is subject to the algorithm used to compress the data so that it can be stored.

In storage, compression is the name of the game. My friend was one of the engineers working for Texas Instruments when the 10 Mb drive was completed. There was a party, and the engineers were all congratulating themselves and thinking no one could compress data as tightly as we could.

That was true for 30 days.

[1] I was given three names like most Americans. However, in our family, the sons were called by letters, not initials, letters. My Dad was EJ, my Granddad was HH, and my great-grandfather was EJ. So, I'm DR, and after my passing at such an early age, I changed my name to DR to always honor them.

[2] Agreement or harmony. How I dressed kept others from seeing the person who could help them. They had no idea that I was knowledgeable.

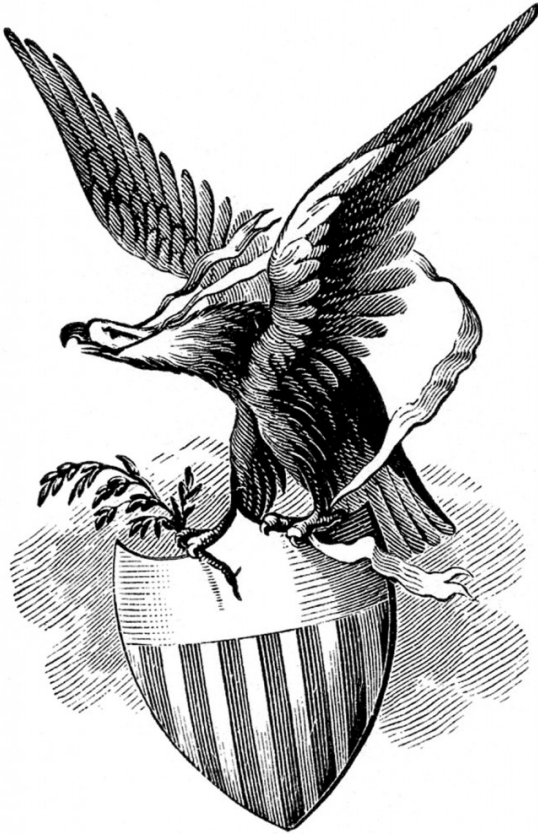
[3] Aphasia is a language disorder that can affect a person's use of language. It can impact their speaking, understanding, reading, and writing ability.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



DR RAWSON

He is a Husband, Father, Grandfather, Son, Brother, Uncle, 32°, K.C.C.H. Mason, Serial Entrepreneur, Possibilist, Independent Consultant, Leader, Author, Speaker, Philanthropist, Veteran, and Friend.



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