

We are our childrens Baggage

PACK LIGHTLY



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Chapter I.

"we are the children of children and we live as we are shown"

- the Great Waponi Chief

I feel compelled to start with, "I have just turned 40 and have realized that I like myself."

There are things I do not like, things that I did not accomplish, but I have grown to like myself. At 17 years old I did not like myself and did not think that I ever would. At 20 I did not think I would ever make it to 40.

If my life is to have any real success, by age 17, each of my children will like themselves (though there will hopefully be a few things that they do not like). Each of them will have grown up with the tools to meet the challenges of the world and to make the changes that they need to in their lives to be happy with where they are, as well as where they are going and be able to share the same with their life partners and children.

Having been told that the first step to recovery is the recognition that you have a problem, I would be remiss in not thanking Ken and Donna Patch for bringing that to my attention. Were it not for them I would not be where I am today: happily married with 3 young girls. They were first to help me understand that "Normal" is a setting on a washing machine and that dysfunction was not a curse but a starting point to defining a brighter future. They also taught my wife and me that parents are responsible for being role models for their children and their friends are responsible for sharing the path to breaking the cycle of dysfunction.

One night I was re-watching one of my favorite movies, Joe Versus the Volcano and heard again a statement that sparked an epiphany in me.

"We are the children of children and we live as we are shown."~ the Great Waponi Chief in Joe Versus the Volcano.

These inspired words triggered an explosion of neurons in my brain and connected so many **realizations** about who I was, where I had come from, and ultimately where I am headed and what my responsibility was to myself, my wife, my children, my siblings, my friends, my

co-workers, and ultimately anyone who would lend an ear.

I realized at that instant that I had become the product of all of my experiences. More than that, I have become the *combination* of those experiences in my life. When combined just so and stirred to the correct consistency, heated at such and such degrees and held under pressure for x number of years and then left out to cool, that one of a kind recipe has given me my unique perspective on the world.

Before I continue, you need to know a few things: I can only write this because both of my parents are dead. Had I written about this while they were alive, reading it might have been what killed them, or at the very least made it so that they most likely would never again have spoken to me. It is *because* of that simple fact that I have chosen to write this.

The baggage that I have accumulated via the events which have shaped my life to this point are the elements that have helped me form my opinions, my world views and my life. My parents have left me with so many things that I can vividly remember which I have had to identify and deal with: threats of being disowned, a complete lack of verbal support as well as a lack of love and commitment. They gave me the memories of the secrets, the paranoia, the arguments, the fear, the anguish and the recurring embarrassment and disappointment. With all of that, I have become who I am and still miss them and all of their faults every single day. It is my wish that I could have taught them as they were being parents what I have discovered in becoming one: I pack the bags of my children's dysfunction every day and they will carry them until they choose to discard them or learn from them on their own. No matter what I do there will be these bags of dysfunction that they need to be liberated from and will be educated by. If I am lucky and do my job well enough, they will have the tools to discard them quickly and to not pass them on to their descendants. *Some of what I give them will be based on assumptions which they will hold up and compare to their own experiences in the world. A few of these will be speedily thrown to one side while still others will be affirmed and hold true in their lives.*

Just before he died, I spent a great deal of time with my father, including the extremely challenging final two months of his life. He informed me that he did not wish to have his life terminated while there was a hope of survival. I stayed with him most days until I, along with my family, decided after several weeks of him being completely unaware of his surroundings and the world, to let the doctors know that they had done enough. It was a paradox: he did not want to live in a nursing home yet was unable to take care of himself and would likely never make it home *since around the clock specialized care and equipment was required.*

After a treatment mishap at the hospital, a widespread infection began ravaging his internal organs. My father was unable to breathe on his own and appeared to be suffering continuously day after day. What it came down to was that it was not his request, but his desire that mattered. It had always mattered to him that he lived a life where he could *live*. Live *freely*, on his own terms. Knowing that, when he was no longer able to live in that manner, I could no longer support his continual pain as he struggled on life support. To this day and to this moment I do not have one ounce of regret. Had the roles been reversed, I truly hope that he would have done the same. By that, I mean made the hard decision; made the best one he could with the limited information available, and lived with the implications of it without regret.

My father lived with regret. Fear, frustration and secrets were his daily companions. Most of those secrets have been taken with him to the grave, but a few he passed on to his children along with a generous helping of his baggage. I see many of these things in myself

as well as in my siblings. People who know me well today find me to be loud and aggressive, passionate and compassionate, loving and respectful and to the best of my ability, honest in every situation. When I am around my siblings however, I find myself reverting into the jungle self which was necessary to exist in the house that I was raised in. I still instinctively become this feral version of me. A version spawned by the exigency of surviving in a house where everything was a competition and the competitors were fierce and unrelenting. If you wanted to get your way, it was incumbent upon you to carve out the space for your needs and continuously compete and scrounge for your share of the limited resources. It is not to say that one would starve. In our house no-one would ever starve. In our house a stranger or guest would share food and warmth without exception. When it came to anything more than the bare necessities however, you would need to...no...be *expected* to argue, fight, yell, scream and defend your position at the top of your lungs to even be considered.

One fine day my father threw me out of the house after a fight - at 2:00 in the morning, telling me that I should go to stay at a shelter. That marked the last time that I ever lived under his roof. He had always told me that when it was my roof, I would be able to make the rules. Years later when he came to live at my house for a period of time, I realized that it is easy to say "my house my rules," yet he was still convinced that he was "master of the house." Until he lost consciousness for the last time, he was convinced that he was in charge and that it was in everyone's best interest that it be that way. Many people who met him thought of him in one of two ways: 1) they loved him in spite of his idiosyncratic personality or, 2) they could not stand him. There were not many people in the middle. If you were in favor and needed something he was kind-hearted and generous. When you were the enemy you were either virtually excluded or you were attacked and trampled. And yet with all of that in mind, I recognize that much of the way that I think and interact with the world is derived from wanting to measure up to the expectations set by, and to win the approval of, my father.

My family was the very model of dysfunction: my parents were married.

Twice.

To each other.

For the last 12 years of their marriage they lived in different residences. She had her house and he had his! My parents loved each other as long as they did not spend too many hours together during a day. They vacationed together a few times a year and spoke almost every day on the phone. As long as they were in separate cities and had their own spaces they got on perfectly (or hung up the phone). When they did live together and could not get away from each other, something would always set off a problem that would quickly escalate and spiral outrageously out of control and they would not be able to speak to each other. Thus ended any brief bouts with domestic tranquility.

My father did not make it to either my high school graduation or my wedding because neither of them were important to him. But he did tell me quite regularly the kind of woman that I needed to marry as well as the kinds of friends that I should associate with. He had no idea about the struggles that I endured while attending junior high or high school with grades or anything else *since he paid little attention to me in these times other than to lecture me*. And for reasons that escape all logical explanation, I managed to make it through school while not one of my brothers had managed to do the same. Truth be told, I had no desire to take a single college class and did not value the experience of going in the slightest. College only happened due to the fact that I was told that I had to. It was the only time after sixth grade that my parents expressed any interest in my education. If however,

I had run into a struggle with my civil rights or was having some protected privilege violated by my community or my school system, he was all over righting the public wrong. On the behalf of myself and my siblings he sued or threatened to start law suits against the school systems that we attended nearly a dozen times while I was growing up. (Needless to say, I got my share of special attention from staff and students alike. I can assure you there is nothing quite like having a notorious troublemaker for a father.)

And for all of this, it was still his opinion that I considered most for much of my life. He cut the yardstick by which I would measure my spouse, my children, my job, my friends and my relationships until I realized that it was up to me to re-cut that yardstick. It was up to me to define how I should measure personal satisfaction. It was up to me to define satisfactory relationships. It was up to me to quantify job success. It was up to me to define the parameters that make up the measure of my life. It was then that I realized - if I were to use his measurements, I might get his results, and they did not take me to where I wanted to go.

It all made sense to me: "We are the children of children and we live as we are shown." and I did not want most of what I had been shown.

I wanted something so much richer. I wanted my children to know that they are unique and valuable. I wanted my wife to want to share every day with me in the same house and feel like her voice was the most important influence in my head. I wanted to inspire those around me and participate in protecting those near me who could not protect themselves and I wanted those that shared a walk down a mile of road in my life to feel richer for the experience.

Since the death of my father I have adopted a completely liberating world view and strive to achieve the vision in my head of "something so much richer". To start down that path I began with a simple philosophy inspired by the Dr. Seuss characters Thing One and Thing Two from the Cat in the Hat.

"It is always one thing or another - but things are what they are..."

The reality of the universe is that we are the product of our environment and experiences. I am free from neither my genetics nor my environment and reality dictates that I will live within the constraints imposed by both. I do however, have enormous influence on how they will impact my decisions in the future. Through careful consideration I intend to discover and effectively use the tools that will enable me to empower my children and keep them from having the same challenges to overcome. Through the process of describing these truths and lessons and sharing them with you, I will be simultaneously learning and teaching these approaches; enabling you as well as myself to raise well adjusted children.

Chapter II.

"the deep end of the pool is only the beginning..." The first of these chapter heading was a quotation from another person. Do the rest of them follow that pattern or are these your own words? If they are your own words, I would suggest removing the quotation marks. IF they are quotes from another person, you need to give attribution.-Editor Sandy 12/16/10 6:40 PM

Discussions about being thrown into the deep end of the pool are often used in discussions to describe a time where one has been put into a situation where they had not received sufficient instruction and preparation for a given circumstance. For me – that expression elicits a very different memory; in my case that swimming pool was owned by my aunt who lived in a beautiful house in Pelham, New Hampshire. When I was 10 years old - on a summer day that was both hot and sunny with a few wispy clouds in the sky – my father who was wearing a blue bathing suit decided that I should learn to swim in the deep end of the pool. With words of encouragementDid he really offer words of encouragement? If you can remember what exactly he said, I think it would provide a stark impact -- the encouraging words set against being thrown in. It would help illustrate the conflicting messages coming from the same man. -Editor Sandy 12/16/10 6:44 PM he threw me into the pool and told me to swim. He was certain that I could do it. I can remember with incredible clarity the day, because I was completely unprepared for the experience of being thrown into the water. Shockingly I discovered that while swimming was easy as long as I could touch the bottom, once the bottom dropped out my ability to swim instantly disappeared. Over multiple occurrences of being thrown into the pool; I consumed copious amounts of chlorinated water, and felt that I was at risk of drowning every single time. It was quite a while before I wanted to be near my father again near a pool. This final sentence of this paragraph feels too trite and smart-ass. Maybe the sentence can just be cut? Is it really necessary? -Editor Sandy 12/16/10 6:47 PM

But throughout my life I have discovered that while swimming, the deep end of the pool is where I like to be. These days I enjoy any great number of water events such as swimming, sailing, water-skiing, snorkeling, para-sailing, deep-sea fishing, and cliff-diving; but all of this was only after I learned that I could gain some level of control over my environment by eliminating my fear. After the process of swimming lessons in the deep end of the pool; overcoming a fear of swimming had its own unique challenges. (what were you headed at with this sentence George?) How about replacing this sentence with: While the process of learning to swim in the deep end of the pool was arduous, overcoming the fear of swimming had its own unique challenges. -Editor Sandy 12/16/10 6:50 PM

My first set of "real" swimming lessons came during my first year at Boy Scout summer camp. Our troop had an annual tradition of a canoe trip; middle of the week (Wednesday Night) at our one week of summer camp. The problem for me was – that, to go on that canoe trip, one had to pass a swimming test. In fact most of the "fun classes" and events that one could take in the aquatic department at summer camp were restricted to people that were categorized as "advanced swimmers". On the first day at camp, each attendee needed to take a swimming test; and on my first day of summer camp; I got to take mine – from the dock on the lake. The swimming test was simply to jump feet first into water over your head and then to swim (4) 25 Meter laps. I can remember with great enthusiasm being signed up for the mid-week canoe trip, and of course the first of the boating classes, the famous "Rowing Class" that would start second period the next morning. The only thing that was standing in my way was this simple swimming test.

I jumped into the water feet first only to realize that this water was over my head. With flashbacks to the swimming pool incident and filled with the panic that I was about to drown, I proceeded to thrash aimlessly in the water until I was rescued – really pulled into a waiting row boat. That water rescue ended any aspirations I had cherished about going on the canoe trip, removed me from the rowing class that I was looking forward to and left me as the laughing stock of my entire troop. My rowing class was replaced by a beginning swimming class which left me limited to water no deeper than my hips. If asked to swim the required distance – I never had a problem; but every single time I tried to jump in over my head I panicked – and needed assistance out of the water. And, so it was, until the last day of the week at summer camp when I finally managed to pass the intermediate swimming test. I accomplished this only when one of my instructors agreed to swim beside me for the duration of the intermediate test.

I can assure you that, at our summer camp, that whole week revolved around a large number of water events. Watching our troop's water polo game from the dock with a life jacket was a total embarrassment. I missed the canoe trip, being left in the custodial care of the camps provisional scout troop (for campers without their own troops and patrols). Leaving my first year of scout camp without my rowing merit badge was a fairly large disappointment as well. It was considered a "rite of passage" in our troop - a fact that my scout leader did not let slip at our awards night some number of months later. [And a note to my former scout master Mike – "TO THIS DAY I STILL REMEMBER THAT".] Wow, that was so much like therapy that I am leaving it in.]

All of that detail probably leaves one wondering why an event at 10 years old and the subsequent events of a year later are so relevant; and they probably would not be – if it were not for the rest of the story. I had worked selling chocolate bars all year to earn the money for that trip to scout camp. I was 11 years old and had managed to sell more boxes of chocolate bars than anyone else in our troops history. I had managed to work out a system; that had locked me into going to summer camp both that year and next year as well. Affording to go to summer camp was not on the family to-do list in 1981 for reasons to be

discussed later, but it taught me that finding a way and developing plans to get what I wanted was the only way to get through life. I had worked very hard selling those candy bars, to have the opportunity to get that rowing merit badge. I had avoided detention on too many occasions while in Jr high. Bringing candy to class was a real no-no. All of that risk, all year long to earn the money to go to camp; and I totally blew it – I left without getting what I wanted. I earned \$6.00 per case of chocolate bars to go to camp. There were 48 candy bars per case – and camp cost about \$120.00 all-in. To put that funding mechanism in context; the simple math was – 20 cases of candy bars times 48 bars each meant – selling 960 candy bars to go to camp; all of that effort to be embarrassed by not being ready to take advantage of the opportunity. While I suspect that most of my fellow troop members were happy that I was there, my highlight of memory for being there was – all of the failure, not the success. I was bound and determined to make up for that.

The following year, I returned to summer camp, and I again signed up for the second period rowing class (a prerequisite for the third period canoeing merit badge). I was told at swim-test time that, since I had just barely passed the intermediate swim test last year, I should take that test again this year as I was probably not prepared to take the advanced swim test. I assured all interested parties that I would not only be successfully completing the advanced swim test, but that this year – I would be completing the boy scout summer camp equivalent of a gold medal by completing the legendary MILE SWIM. A commitment to the mile swim required expert endurance and a commitment to 4 nights of evening activities for preparation. While many individuals started, very few ever made it to the second night due to the challenges; and within our group – it was unheard of for someone who had never passed an advanced swimming test to want to sign up for it. I was assured that spending my limited time at summer camp on the mile swim would be a waste of time, since based on my previous training and ability I was unprepared for the challenge. I was undeterred. I did sign up for the mile swim and against the advice of troop leadership was allowed to go to the first night of the event (they were convinced that I would not finish the first night). While I was the last one to finish on the first night, I listened to others give up and exit; but I persisted. I was determined to at least finish the first night. All that I had to do was finish the count, to get to the end of the first night to get invited back to the second night and so I did. I was very excited that I had met the challenge, but I was exhausted. I could barely walk back to our camp, and I over slept in the morning; but I had done it. I also made it through the second night of the test and managed to swim half a mile.

On the afternoon of the third day, my dreams of demonstrating my ability to swim $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile were shattered when I was escorted from the summer camp to a hospital with pains of an appendicitis. I spent the night and half of the next day at the hospital; where I was diagnosed as not having an appendicitis but suffering from dehydration. I was returned to camp for dinner the following evening missing a full day from camp. Having failed to complete the $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile swim, I was under the impression that I was no longer a candidate for the mile swim award, but I was determined to show up to try anyway.

While being told that such a test was not a necessity since I had just returned from the hospital -- and no-one would think less of me -- I went to the dock anyway and jumped into the water. I had assured my scout leaders that I did not need to complete the mile, but I needed to see how much I could do "for me." I assured them that since everyone else was there, it was perfectly safe. Everyone knew that when I could do no more – I could safely leave the water with minimal risk. Sure enough, I did leave the water – dead last. Yes, I was there for a long time because I kept going until I had made every since stroke. I completed the entire mile swim.

I completed the mile swim on my first attempt, the first year that I was qualified to compete. Not because I was a very strong swimmer, but because I was a strong, determined competitor; and because I was completely convinced that all of those around me had underestimated my drive, determination, and ability, and finally because I refused to quit. I was not only struggling to get what I wanted; I was struggling to prevent that which I did not want - a feeling of failure and lack of achievement. I was not going to be deterred by being excluded by health issues or anything else. I was going to succeed because I had chosen not to be deterred by my fear, lack of experience or my previous inability. I had simply given myself no other alternative but to succeed or try until I could not try anymore; but no one was going to be allowed to say that I quit without trying to do my best.

The next time that I stood up with my scout troop to receive merit badges, I got my rowing merit badge (admittedly on the second year at camp). I also received a large collection of other merit badges earned both at camp and at home -- all through hard work and determination. I managed to complete all of my merit badges from summer camp even being out a day (which is a lot for only 5 class days). I also heard my scout master warn my fellow scouts that they should be careful when prejudging either my ability and dedication or my determination. He recognized, that while at my first year at summer camp I could not pass the advanced swimming test and therefore could not participate with the troop in many activities, on my second year - I had become the youngest scout in our troop to complete one of the most challenging aquatic tests at summer camp -- the mile swim [and another note to my former scout master Mike - "TO THIS DAY I STILL REMEMBER THIS TOO :) THANKS!" and Wow, that was also so much like therapy that I am leaving it in too..]

While writing this I found it interesting to observe that the following year I spent two weeks at summer camp. One week with my troop, and the next week with the provisional scout troop at camp [where I met some people that who would become my next scout troop]. While at scout camp in my third year, I took classes and learned to canoe, sail, snorkel, and water-ski. In the weekend between my two weeks at camp, I also participated as a life-guard and assistant swimming instructor for cub scouts. If I had not overcome the fear that I had learned that first day at the pool, I would never have participated in some of the most amazing experiences in my life. If I had not been so determined and motivated to prove to myself what I could do - and that other people could be wrong - I might never have learned that I could swim a mile.

For those who are now considering a little aquatic excitement, I would highly recommend bringing the kids snorkeling in Belize with sharks and stingrays. But please - take your time and teach them the basics of swimming first and that sharks and stingrays can be friendly. REMEMBER THE MORAL OF THE STORY: please do not traumatize the children and keep them from their own adventures. Like many things in life - it is essential that you understand and have some level of control over the fundamentals before you can enjoy the benefits of experience that come with some level of mastery. PS: While you are there in Belize, if the kids have overcome a fear of heights - cliff diving nearly a hundred feet into a blue hole in Belize is quite amazing as well.

Chapter III.

"Johnny was right dead right as he sped along - be he'd been just as dead if he'd been dead wrong..."

Growing up in our house, being right was big. I mean really big! It was always better to do what was right, than to do what was smart, what was practical or what was easy. RIGHT WAS RIGHT! However, determining what was right might be subject to interpretation. It is fair to say that the culmination of years of lessons on right and wrong come down to this one thought, "One man in the right constitutes a majority, but he may just need a judge to prove it." My dad, and therefore my house, was all about "the law" - really "a simplified version of the common-law." Our house rules were based on previous decisions, best practices, averaged punishments, and the availability of a defense based on "I might have been wrong, but the rules could clearly be interpreted in this way." Concepts like "Double Jeopardy" and "rules of evidence" were the ultimate get out of jail free card. If political affiliation were genetic, I would have been born a pure constitutionalist.

One of the most offensive statements ever discussed with my father was a proclamation by a sitting federal judge who, while hearing a case that my father was arguing, declared that "the protections guaranteed under the constitution of the United States are a myth." My father started a campaign to have this sitting judge removed from office, but he could not make it happen since the judge had less than a month to his retirement from the bench. Until his death, my father complained because of his inaction this judge managed to become a senator. This was one of the many times when my father took on the system and lost.

Taking on the system was never a problem for my dad - except that towards the end of his life. He was sure that many elements of the system were out to get him. When my mother got sick from a bacterial blood infection, my father's first reaction was that she had been poisoned - potentially by those in the federal government upset about his research into Oklahoma City Bombing and the Gulf War Syndrome.

It might be so easy to describe these fears as paranoid delusions, except that he did in-fact

have a factual basis for concern. My father spent years researching what he called "gulf-war syndrome". He assisted his neighbor and friend Sergeant Paul Perrone in researching common symptoms that they both got upon coming back from the gulf-war - something that he convinced others to start calling "gulf-war syndrome". Paul was one of the first people to testify about his sickness before congress. "The Congressionally-mandated Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses (RAC) found evidence that supports a probable link between exposures to neurotoxins and the development of neurological disorders." Paul wrote a book called "Toy Soldier - Sergeant Paul Perrone Story" which described him as a passionate and extremely well-informed veteran on nearly every aspect of the military, gulf-war syndrome, and veterans' benefits. My dad worked hard, assisting Paul to get his veterans benefits and identifying and associating symptoms with gulf-war syndrome.

This was not a one-time incident. One day, my dad called me from a payphone to tell me that he was down the street and needed to talk right now. This was the beginning of him spending a number of months hiding out in my office and sleeping on the couch in my apartment. He believed that he was being followed. He would not answer a telephone, use a credit card, cash a check, or tell anyone where he was. When he decided it was safe to move, he retreated to his house in Maine - where he lived alone until he had a stroke.

It is a bit unclear for me as to how the above paragraph represents another "incident" like your father's work on gulf-war syndrome. Clearly his work on gulf-war syndrome was well-founded, but his beliefs that people were following him, etc. were probably indicative of his mental illness. Therefore, I am not sure. Perhaps you are trying to demonstrate the challenges of being his son.. when some things he did were so clearly right and other things were based on paranoia? Was it difficult for you to challenge what he said was "right" when you knew it was paranoia fueling his thoughts?-Editor Sandy 1/19/11 11:31 AM

I do not believe that there are many people more interested in being RIGHT than my dad and from learned-behavior myself. But my father had never taken on the idea that two people could have opposing points of view and be right at the same time. We differed on topics as diverse as business, politics, religion, public policy, racism, sexuality and charity.

It is probably because of my father that I am so stretched in my politics, and at the same time so tolerant of difference. To me, the use of the word "stretched" in this case would indicate tolerance... are you trying to say that you are so conservative in your politics but tolerant of difference? So firm in your politics but tolerant of difference? -Editor Sandy 2/1/11 8:15 AM

His passion for being right and for correcting the injustices of the world are probably the product of his upbringing and challenges as a young man. My father was medically retired from the military after a few years of service. He was so proud of his participation in the military that he had pictures of the planes that he worked on hanging in the hospital just before he died. He participated in chat rooms and forums assisting people in navigating the red tape of registering for "service connected disability" claims.

But with all of that pride and dedication, we could never agree on ideas like accountability of leadership in Washington, DC. He did not believe that the President of the United States was required to uphold and defend the Constitution during time of war, and that torture and disregard for civil liberties might actually be the price of safety. During the 2004 presidential election, my father's inability to demand accountability from our government leadership left me to pose a fundamental question about the choosing from multiple rights and wrongs. At the time - I summed up the entire dilemma into one question that deserves much consideration:

"Is blindly following the orders of the sitting President of the United States, who is violating the Constitution he was sworn to uphold and defend, patriotism or treason?"

While I sat in my father's hospital room and watched the hanging of Saddam Husein (the President of Iraq at the time of the US Invasion) I wondered, "If the roles were reversed would it be clear that our president had not broken the law, and guilty of crimes against humanity?" As I write this, I wonder if, in the final two weeks of his presidency, G. H. W. Bush, the President of the United States, will blanket-pardon his entire staff to protect them from charges of crimes against humanity? I guess what scares me the most is the slippery slope that allows for exceptions to our core values and makes exceptions permissible under the guise of patriotism. While every part of my upbringing was dedicated to the pursuit of a fundamental principal called "the rule of law" - when the rule of law conflicted with my fathers conviction for patriotism, he quickly abandoned the order of the rule of law in favor of blind patriotism. George, the highlighted passage significantly strays from the topic of your relationship with your father & feels a bit like a self-indulgent plug for your personal politics (although I agree with them 100%) -Editor Sandy 2/1/11 8:18 AM

I find that one of my greatest disappointments with the my upbringing is that when at the end of his life, when my fathers values were put to the test - he died displaying a misguided sense of nationalism rather than standing on his convictions for the rule and order of law. He denied the same principals upon which he had built my entire value system throughout my most formative years. Should I take this to mean that my values are only to be honored when it is expedient or did an overly developed sense of national identity cloud his judgement in his final days? I will have to consider that it is the latter and that I should continue to inculcate values in my children that honor standing up for your principals, and questioning the direction of our leadership when it is inconsistent with firmly held principals based on the rule of law. I would like to hear you explore more about your inability to reconcile what your father had taught you and espoused about politics and how he felt about the war at the end of his life. Delving into the some details about how much you respected his opinion and felt this was contrary to what he had taught you. -Editor Sandy 2/1/11 8:20 AM

Chapter IV.

"grace is a lot more than 'rub a dub dub - thanks for the grub - yea God!'"

My father's primary message was, when dealing with other people, one should have as much "grace" as possible - where he intended grace to be flexibility in understanding and compassion for the situations of others.

My father was strongly opinionated on topics of relationships, but went through his entire marriage with my mother living in a relationship of tender caring and continuous conflict. He told me that he would give my mother a divorce when she became engaged to someone that she could spend the rest of her life with, but until then he would not even consider it.

They had what I would call a distant coexistence. My father and mother could not live under the same roof, and yet probably loved each other more than many couples that share a bed. If anyone or anything threatened the other - they were a team to be contended with. My dad and mom are buried together now and that is the way that they would have wanted it. But until the very end - they lived most happily in different states, vacationing together every few months. They talked on the phone nearly every day and when they were not arguing, they were both caring about each other. They were, however, best apart most of the time. They were my first real-life example of an alternative lifestyle couple. Their alternative was to not share the same space but to share two separate but distinct lives - bonded by their previous time spent together and by their six children. After many long conversations with my dad, it was clear to me that, aside from the first year or two of marriage, the happiest time between them was in the time she came to take care of him after his stroke - where, for the first time, they rekindled a romance that abruptly ended with her dying of a bacterial blood infection. It is important to note that she caught that infection while taking him to hospitals for treatment, and died within six hours of having it

diagnosed. I do not believe that he ever forgave himself for that.

He always spoke of finding ways to apply grace, and by that he meant his definition of "the grace of god." My father had become an ordained minister who had attended bible schools that were both very conservative and very liberal. He was mostly non-denominational but spent much time with people of the Pentecostal faith. We spent many summers in my early years participating in tent revivals in Maine and New Hampshire with traveling ministers from the Bible-Belt. My father also spent a fair amount of time giving fill-in sermons at local churches that needed assistance. He always considered his calling to be support for the activities of other ministries. He tended not to impose a specific flavor (or denomination if you like) of Christianity, as long as you were willing to adopt some flavor of Christianity. He never told me where I should go to church, and I still consider myself Advent Christian. My mother was Baptist, and being Advent Christian is close enough for me; but I am not sure that I can wear the trappings of either very well. My father was right - every individual's walk needs to be their own and that denominations of Christianity provide an opportunity for people who need different things from a support structure to get it in a way that best suits them.

However, my father and I differed quickly when I questioned the manipulative behaviors of organized religions as a device for the control of populations and the mechanisms for constructing frameworks of spiritual intimidation. My father died convinced that every word in the Bible was true and was not subject to manipulation by man. One of our final conversations was about "The Red Text". In the King James Version of the Bible the red text are the spoken words of Jesus, and I posed a simple question -- could he point out, where, in the red text, it stated that organized religion was a good idea -- that it did not lead to possible corruption and to a disconnection from the true message of god the father or of Jesus himself. I am a Christian but believe that some information has been obfuscated, excluded or manipulated from the modern Bible. I believe that the true message of god is intended to be interpreted in the contemplation of the law Please explain how you are using the word "law" in this context -Editor Sandy 2/1/11 8:28 AM , and understanding the essential message of Jesus to "... love one another as I have loved you; and there is no path to the father but by me." For reasons that escape my understanding, my father was not willing to contemplate that control and manipulation of the public has been the operating behavior of organized religion for nearly two Milena.

There was a giant blind spot in what we could call objectivity when it comes to conflicts between the interpretation of the church and the facts governing the natural order of the universe. My father and I never actually discussed why -- if the world was only 5,000 years old -- there are still dinosaur bones underground all over the world. Based on his interpretation that "every line in the King James Version of the Bible" was to be taken literally as the divine word of god, there was no possibility that the world was any older than (days in the current known longest calendar) + 7 days. That all makes perfect sense to me; except for one problem. If the definition of a day is the time that it takes from sunset to sunset, then how exactly did we ever get to **Day 4: God creates lights in the heavens?** Here is the fifth divine command, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens..."

My objection is not with the word, but with the fallibility of the processes of human translation being applied to the constructs of evolving languages combined with limited understanding. Galileo spent the last years of his life under house arrest on orders of the Roman Inquisition. Galileo was found "vehemently suspect of heresy", namely of having held the opinions that the Sun lies motionless at the center of the universe, that the Earth is not at its center and moves, and that one may hold and defend an opinion as probable after it has been declared contrary to Holy Scripture. It was not until the 20th century almost 400 years later that the Pope John Paul II agreed to expressed regret for how the Galileo affair

was handled, and officially conceded that the Earth was not stationary.

I would like to hope that I can teach my children that they must remain objective -- that changes in understanding can impact accepted science, and that there is some way to find a bridge between faith and science. Already, I have had to discuss with my daughter why Pluto stopped being considered a planet. I am hopeful that she takes the lesson and applies it to areas where faith might be interpreted as an issue of translation not a as a conflict with science.

While speaking about the life of Jesus, and putting the gospels into context the following conclusion stuck in my head when I read it:

"The most sinful infidelity is not being unfaithful to some church, but being unfaithful to the truth; and the vilest treason is not turning against some government, but turning against the weak and helpless."

- Wallace Wattles - Jesus: The Man and His Works

Chapter V.

"the state has almost all of the power; the only one that it lacks is the ability to control the outcome of an election..."

My father was not a big fan of non-apportioned taxation; and believed that the current laws and procedures governing the Internal Revenue Code; were at best unconstitutional; and at worst the worst crime perpetuated on the population since the Boston Tea Party. The only reason that he was not a text-book tax protester was that it was grounds for termination of IRS Employees if a member of their family was an active tax protester. He was a strong believer that "No State shall make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts" and he always carried a writ of Habeas Corpus in his pocket. He ultimately believed in the rule of law; and the power of the people to change bad decisions and control their own destiny.

A writ of habeas corpus is a judicial mandate to a prison official ordering that an inmate be brought to the court so it can be determined whether or not that person is imprisoned lawfully and whether or not he should be released from custody. The Constitution mandates and the Supreme Court has "recognized the fact that '[t]he writ of habeas corpus is the fundamental instrument for safeguarding individual freedom against arbitrary and lawless state action.'" Now to be sure; most individuals would NEVER in their entire lives need to have such a document never mind carry one. My father was that exception and he not only had one; he had a reputation for using it. My father filed a complaint against the Police Department of the City of Manchester New Hampshire with the FBI in 1976. He considered them to be abusive racist thugs prone to abuse their position under color of law. He decided that he was going to prove it; he bought a box of business cards and put himself on the ballot to run for Sheriff of Hillsborough County in New Hampshire. He proceeded to tell anyone who would listen that "an ordained minister" was going to clean up the police corruption in Hillsborough County; and yet most people did not believe him. On one particular day in January 1976 he decided to be an activist.

While he was in front of a building in the projects in Manchester's West Side; (a very racially mixed neighborhood) he was witness to what he called an abuse of power between a Hispanic individual and a number of Manchester's finest officers in Blue. He watched with great enthusiasm while there was a disagreement between this Hispanic individual and the police escalated. When he was ordered by the local police to move along; he explained that he believed that he had a constitutional right to be there; and that he had no intention of leaving. I can assure you; (having lived in that neighborhood) that they would have been under impressed with his unwillingness to comply.

The way that he tells the story from there; was that they asked him for his name. He suggested that his Fifth Amendment Right exempted him from having to comply. He had shifted his position in the situation from spectator to combatant. As I am sure that you can imagine; the police in Manchester New Hampshire were not very impressed with someone refusing to move along while they were aggressively interrogating a suspect. The idea that the individual in question would not identify themselves added a fuel to the fire; and within moments someone had introduced a nightstick into the situation; and proceeded to knock the defiant individual to the ground. Soon the nightstick was joined by the notoriously defensive tactic of "pepper spray to the face" of the uncooperative individual. When the police went to escort the newly handcuffed individual to the police transport vehicle often referred to by the locals as "the patty wagon"; the rather uncooperative bystander took this rare opportunity to sexually assault the police officer with his knee into one of the officers most sensitive areas.

One might suspect that an arrest record might not do much for your political career while running for Sheriff; or so one might have thought until he got to the police station; and was given his one phone call.

INTERMISSION: Now I have been told that lives come down to moments; and for him; this was one of those moments; in NO-LIMIT poker it is called that "GO BIG or GO HOME" moment.

He claims that he used his ONE PHONE CALL - to CALL THE MAYOR of the City of Manchester - to identify himself; to file a complaint; and demand that he be immediately released or he would file a lawsuit against the City of Manchester for False Arrest; abuse of power; violation of his civil rights under color of law; assault and battery with a deadly weapon; and anything else he could think of when the headache and the effects of the pepper spray went away. (and just in case all else failed - yes, he had a writ of habeas corpus in his wallet to get himself to a judge)

I have to admit - independent corroboration of the phone call is impossible to come by; and I was too young to read the news paper. But I heard tell of the story from his friends; some who refused to get involved at the time for risk to their political careers. He did however bring to the public eye issues about racial profiling; police brutality; and an mood of tension that filled the streets in those days. I have yet to read a copy of "Who the hell is William Loeb" by Kevin Cash; but I did see a video tape of his interview on the Donahue Television show from the 1980's. Cash was talking about Loeb (the editor of the Manchester Union Leader) mismanaging the news by running stories about some crazy minister running for sheriff while the real political issues of the 1976 New Hampshire Primary were relegated to the back pages. He was always proud of the fact that during the 1976 primary he ran against the incumbent sheriff in his own party; and took nearly 40% of the vote and he only ever bought a box of business cards.

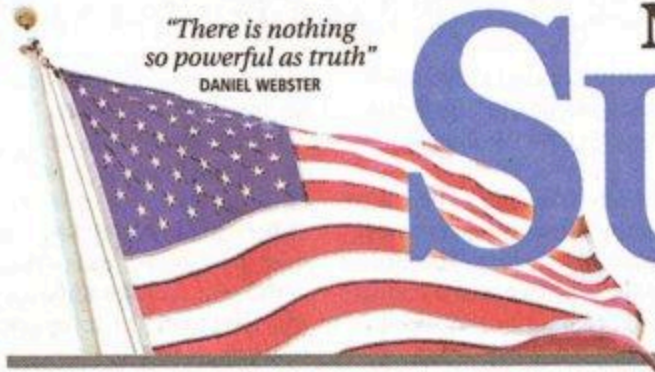
He was never well enough to serve in public office; and I do not think that he would have made a great sheriff; but he might have made a great defender of the public trust; but in

the end - he always feared that the police were out to get revenge and not protect the public trust that he so longed for and fought for. After that incident he managed to antagonize the local police enough times to use his writ to make arguments with a number of judges. His attempts to speed up behind a police car to find out how fast they were going; and write the officer a ticket as a concerned citizen did not help him win friends or influence people. He did want to join the National Chiefs of Police Association and did manage to qualify by becoming a community Civil Defense Director.

I tell that story; because I told it just like that at his funeral. He never did manage to get elected to public office; but he did spend him time perusing and winning a number of law suites that evened the playing fields for ordinary citizens. If he had been well enough I always believed he would have loved to be an elected official. While discussing how he could not represent the people in the way that he would have wanted too; I told my friends that some day; I would stand up to represent the people and would run for office - and I would also try to win and make a difference. At the whim and suggestion of my friends - that is exactly what I did; two days after his funeral I put my name on a ballot - just to learn the process. For the two years since then I have represented the over 8000 people in my community as a Selectman.

While we can not and should not try to control what our children will believe in; we can influence how they will stand up for it; what they will do about it; and how they can protect others while who can't protect themselves along the way. Today I represent people who can not or do not vigilantly watch the day to day activities that can effect them in their community. I attempt to protect them from abuses of action or inaction by their empowered officials and employees; and from the curses of ignorance and inactivity. I hope that I can pass on the same desires to my children. When I was 7 years old; my father was arrested defending the rights of another; today my 6 year old daughter watches me on television, and wants to be a selectman so that she can protect and help people. I hope that when she is my age; she remembers my story so fondly; and does her best to improve the community in which she lives. My 9 year old daughter will remember the presidential primary from when she was 8 years old in a different way. She will remember standing up protesting the exclusion of a presidential candidate from the Republican debates; and having that image memorialized in the same paper that highlighted her grandfather almost 30 years before.

*"There is nothing
so powerful as truth"*
DANIEL WEBSTER

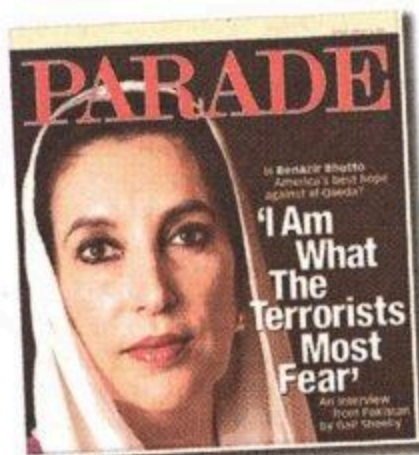


NEW HAMPSHIRE SUNDAY

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Today
IN
New Hampshire's
Newspaper



NATION & WORLD

The Bhutto interview

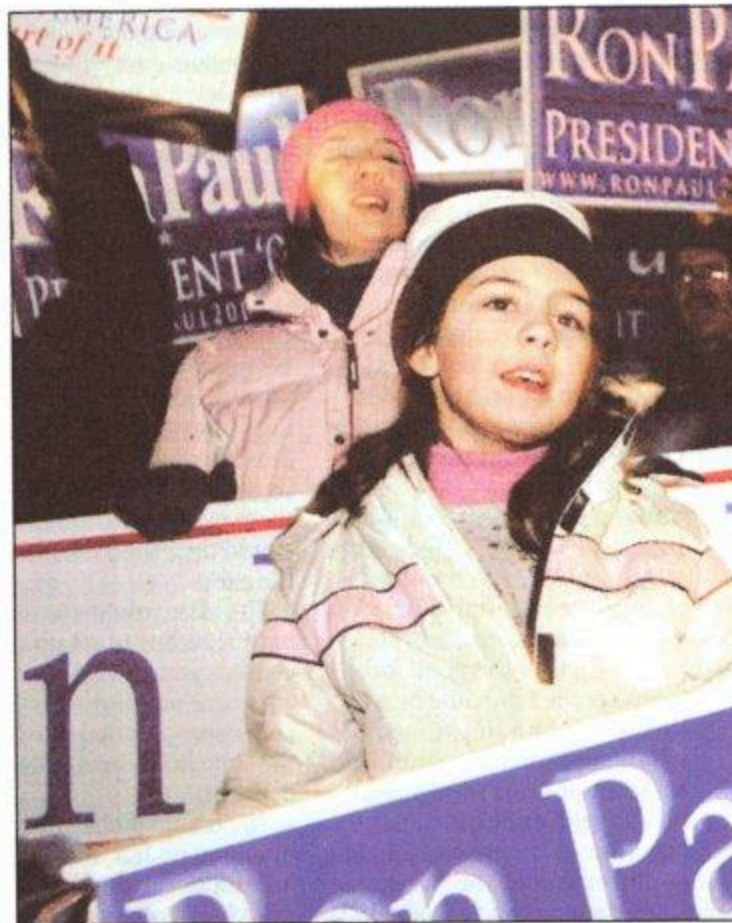
Parade today features one of the last interviews with the late Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, whose assassination Dec. 27 made the political situation even more chaotic in her country, a key player in the war on terror. ► **Parade Magazine**

NEW HAMPSHIRE

FIRST problem unveiled

Yesterday's kickoff event at Southern

NEW HAMPSHIRE



Stephanie Lambert chants along with fellow Ron Paul support

Chapter VI.

"I do not want you to know who I am - I want you to know who I pretend to be;
just like my father, his father and his father before him. "

For reasons that escape me; the modern definition of the "Normal" family was heavily influenced by visions presented in a box called a television. 'Leave It to Beaver' and 'Ozzie and Harriet' were the cornerstones of the delusion that the 'nuclear family' was the yardstick for normalcy; and the failure to measure up was cause for crisis. Admission that your family was outside this norm was a declaration of public failure. An objective comparison might indicate that well more than half and in-fact more than nearly all families experienced frustrations' unaddressed by our new national yardstick. While 'Leave It to Beaver' was never on my preferred viewing list; I have know of it's existence; and how it provided guidance about "how things should be."

But I watched how things went in High School when a young lady got pregnant; once word got out – she was removed. The standard procedure in the 80's when I was in high school was that pregnant girls were to removed instantly; and almost never to be let back. This was similar to the case in the time of my grandparents; and great grandparents; but it was much more secretive. While thinking about it – my mother was born to my unwed grandmother. When my great grandmother was born out of wedlock; she was raised by her grandparents - as sister to her own mother. And SHHHHHH! NOBODY BETTER EVER TALK ABOUT IT!

My father was into genealogy and wanted to trace back his family tree as far back as possible. He would go to the state library in Maine; and pour through books finding the next reference to his and my mother's ancestors. He was very happy with his work and progress; with one simple exception – both sides of the family hated him for it.

My mother was born out of wedlock; with the name of her father blanked out on the birth certificate [a secret few people knew; which was who her father was, until her obituary was

published – as no one dare mentioned it out loud.] My mother grew up with her mother's maiden name if I understand correctly.

My Grandmother (my father's mother) was in a similar situation; where her mother was sent away while pregnant; and after the baby came – it was introduced as her sister. That side of the family was in such denial that once my father let the cat out of the bag; his mother had become so upset that some of his sisters would no longer speak to him. My grandmother threatened to disown him; and write him out of the will (now that I think about it – I guess that it is where he learned that tactic.)

While I consider the situation I got into with my first wife while we were engaged; which was moving up our wedding date by a couple of months to accommodate an unexpected pregnancy. We were admonished by both of our families to "Do the Right Thing." As I sit here and consider it; the definition of "the right thing" might be an interesting consideration. My first wife's parents were married (if I recall correctly) because they had an unexpected pregnancy situation. Where did this idea of "the right thing" come from; and was getting married really "the right thing?" My first wife and I were planning on getting married after I had returned to work full time; as I had been in a significant accident. On the good advice of family and friends we entered into a marriage that lasted less than two years; and left the both of us frustrated with relationships. We had lived together for a number of years; and a piece of paper was not going to change my intended commitment was it? We were too young to get married. She needed someone who I was not; and spent the last year of our marriage trying to find the right husband elsewhere. Less than a month after we were divorced she married again; and adopted my son and had his name changed to match that of his father and brother.

This concept of the right thing seems a little strange to me. While I was growing up; nobody really offered good advice on the topic until someone got pregnant; and then – the solution was to "Do the Right Thing." That is what they told my aunt – who is the same age as I am – when she got pregnant at 16; for her – "the right thing" was different she was told; give the child up for adoption like her big sister had done.

Do you see a repetitive pattern here? This problem is not about pregnancy; that is a symptom of a much larger problem. We were not talking about functional relationships or even sex in any way that was not reactionary and based on public opinion. My father would not even sign the school permission slip to allow me to attend the regular scheduled sex education classes that were part of the curriculum. I was allowed to take a "non-sex-ed" relationship class; but sex was a taboo topic; as was anything but the public presentation of a traditional family.

As I have mentioned – I did not have a traditional nuclear family. My parents could not cohabitate; but it does not end there; it barely starts there. My father and mother had a strange and competitive relationship. They got a divorce; and then "for the sake of the children" mom moved into the house. My Dad had claimed that he needed to be closer to his Doctors and we moved from Maine to New Hampshire. I have just this moment realized; that a short time after the move – she moved into the house. It must have been fate.

It was not long after – that mom's boyfriend started visiting the house on a regular basis. This in and of itself might not have seemed strange; as we all knew him, he as a good friend of my dad's and had even played Santa Clause for me when I was 4 years old. We had known him a very long time. But my mom and her boyfriend started having sleep overs, and my dad would regularly be sleeping on the couch; while his former best friend was sleeping in his room with his ex-wife. I have to admit this does seem to be a real model of dysfunction; but as they say in infomercials; "But Wait – There is More!" Dad had some frustrations with this arrangement; and as you may recall; I had told you that my father

would not give my mother a divorce; well that was after the second marriage. They are about to get remarried. Not because they have established this new romance that sweeps her off of her feet; no! It is because my father will put her boyfriend to the test – and force his former best friend to “make an honest woman out of her” or “he would”.

Now with other parts of this story I have told you about the hearsay; for which I had no personal exposure; but for what happened next; I was a personal participant. Now mind you – I was not allowed to attend sex education classes while in school; but I suspect that was about to transpire next was probably not covered there anyway.

One night while in a deep sleep; my father knocked on my door and handed me a cordless phone. He told me that if things got out of hand; I was to call the police. That was almost all of the instruction I was given. I was also told that no matter what I was not to fall back asleep; and that I must be a witness to the conversation. With these instructions; I sat almost silently at the top of the stairs for the next few hours. My father was about to put an ultimatum to his former best friend; “make an honest woman out of her” or “I Will.” He argued “She needs to have a husband.” (what? – I will get to clarity on the lack of logic in that statement later.) And comments like “Which of us is it going to be?” were repeated loudly and frequently.

Next I heard sentences that did not make any sense. The pronouns were all wrong. These people apparently were so dysfunctional with the English language that when they got tense they were not able to speak the language correctly. They were talking about who had screwed up who’s relationship, and who had stolen who from the other party; and so on and so forth. I thought these people were stupid; because if I had actually heard them correctly; my mother had in a fit of jealousy interfered with my father’s relationship first; and that this was the culmination of a 13 year old tug of war; between my father; my mother; and their mutual love interest. That would make my publicly homophobic father; not quite so homophobic; and my mother a frustrated ex-wife for reasons that had never been made clear.

I do believe to this day that she genuinely loved both of them; but since there mutual love interest was more interested in sex than in committed relationship; with a few days my father and mother were remarried. Up until that point; it had never occurred to me that any of this was going on. Neither of them would be willing to admit it or consider sharing it. This conversation happened in 1985; and my father and I did not discuss the topic again until 2001. I do not know if he ever discussed it with other members of my family, and never went out of his way to publicly promote his lifestyle; but he did spend a great deal of time trying to help others come to terms with their different sexual interests.

I think that it is important to point out; that after the 1985 incident; I had not taken on board that either of my parents had sexual identity issues; and had not considered until a conversation in 2001 that my father might consider himself gay. All of his actions and advice left me with issues on topics of sexuality. The moment that I realized that I was in the house of a lesbian couple for the first time; I had a genuine fear reaction. I got physically ill, and had to leave. Because of the media and misinformation as part of my upbringing; I was completely convinced that this was abnormal, dangerous to me personally for reasons that totally escape me.

Today, I would say that sexual identity is a matter of a personal nature; and that some individuals struggle much of their lives with their sexual identity. As a society we are only beginning to adapt to the idea that these identities and relationships are as real to these individuals as other more clearly defined roles. My father died without every telling me that he believed in a more “acceptable” definition of these relationships in our society like “gay marriage” or “civil unions”. I have many friends who have adopted alternative forms of

relationships; that make them feel more comfortable; and for them – these are “the right thing.” I believe that it is better to discuss and identify that different people have different “right things” than it is to fit every peg into the same hole; and deprive individuals of their right to express themselves as individuals. We are not; and probably have never been the “normal” society that we all seem to compare ourselves too. Maybe we as a society will all gain benefit from identifying to ourselves our own potential dysfunction; which is imposing our world view on others; and accept that until and only if we ourselves decide to change it “we are who we are”. This idea of imposing the “Do the Right Thing” concept and hiding anything outside of an arbitrary definition of normal “in the closet” has only served us badly for generations.

Chapter VII.

"Find a vision, identify the destination, develop a roadmap, execute your plan and have the time of your life."

I would like to say that I have had an interesting career; certainly a more interesting one than my parents. My mother went through several attempts at a career during the divorced period and then settled into a rhythm working for the federal government; working up the latter at the IRS. My father spent most of his adult life sick; and did not make what I would describe as a role model for structured employment. He did not have a "9-5 job" or any job for that matter; all of my life that I can remember. It is not that he did not want to work; it really was that working in a structured environment would have been near impossible. This is not to say that my father or family had a welfare mentality; where work was not important, productive contribution to society was a valuable part of my learning and growing up experience; cash flow on the other hand was always very tight... My family always looked for ways to supplement the family income that were within his limits. These included everything from aluminum, copper, brass and gold recovery from the scrap metal pile at the local dump; to odd jobs like mowing lawns for neighbors. I spent a great deal of time working at a local farm picking produce; splitting wood; making apple cider; and being a general farm hand. When I got a little older I wrote software for small businesses and helped people with computer work while I was in High School. When I was a freshman I made a couple of hundred dollars in "software assistance" to some upperclassmen who needed "coaching" in completing their final projects for profit (lets call it my first real consulting gig).

I never thought of myself as a slouch; and did odd jobs; and really wanted to get a job the summer between my Junior and Senior years of high school. My father was forbidding me from getting a job; he declared that it would probably be the last summer I would have off for a long time. Like so many times before - he was right. I skipped working that summer; and it was the last real time I had not working; except for times of illness and recovery. Once I started working - it was straight into a job; and then another on the weekends. Before long I had managed to acquire three jobs. The job that I liked the most was selling computers for Radio Shack. I enjoyed the computers; because I was good with them and understood them. I enjoyed the process of selling more than I thought that I might. Before long I found myself moving out of the structured 9-5 mentality. I was often asked to assist customers that I met at Radio Shack; in doing a wide range of external tasks like installing

VCR's so that you could watch one channel and record another, choosing and setting up computer software, or helping businesses setup databases. What I realized was that I could get paid more for solving specialty problems.

As a commissioned sales person who got paid on performance, and as a regular contractor who was getting paid for specialty expertise; I had discovered a magic recipe. There is a disconnect between working hourly and getting paid for solving problems. I remembered in school being taught in a basic business class that you could buy and sell things; but somewhere in the translation the magic benefits of "keeping the profits" were lost in the translation. I was a good sales person and a reasonable consultant for doing higher tech odd jobs; but my odd jobs were fed from by local access to customers via my position as a retail sales person.

While working for Radio Shack and consulting I managed to attend a semester of College that my parents insisted that I attend. I was good at consulting; and sales – but college was another story. Both of my parents thought it was a good idea; there was only one problem. I did not fit the mold; and the system appeared inflexible. My classes at vocational school had earned me a number of credits in advanced topics for a 2 year degree with UNH; but did not enable me to escape a large number of prerequisites. While I had acquired 18 credits for things like programming; database design; and operating systems; I needed to take a number of introductory classes like "introduction to keyboarding class". After rather aggressive conversations with both a department head and dean my college career came to an abrupt end. I had planned on taking a semester off and finding another educational strategy.

While attending school and working I did manage to find some time to go out and play; and while I was at a night club I met a girl; who I ended up spending a large amount of time with. In April of 1987 on my way to work one morning; I swerved to avoid a dog in the road; and hit a tree head on. I found myself in the hospital with a broken neck. My parents were not very fond of my girlfriend and when it was time to exit the hospital both parties forced to make a decision between living with the parents and staying with the girlfriend; and her parents. Going from being completely self reliant to dependent in a week was very frightening. While there were long term issues from the broken neck; I was back to work part time 4 months later.

Living with my girlfriends family was very strange but educational. They were a very blue collar family, who had a completely different world view about earning a living. They could not understand not having a predictable income; and found working on commission to be a "foolish mans game." Not a single one of them had a profession or even what I would call a career. They simply traded hours for dollars; and worked hard most all of her relatives worked between two manufacturing companies. These people understood spending time; and creating value for money. Not only that – they seemed offended at the idea that the investors who owned the property that they rented made money from them. They rented everything; and did nothing to find a way to acquire real wealth or create financial independence. While I was trying to get back on my feet, I told them that I would find a way to overcome my limitations and circumstances. I can say that while I did marry into that family; I ended up divorced from that family as well. After the divorce I did not see the day to day changes in the family; but I saw my former father in law working at 7Eleven across from the school that I was teaching at 15 years later. It appears that they never escaped their "hours for dollars" circle. (It is sad to say that the hourly employee mentality of trading hours for dollars and not creating new value in the world is a trap for those who are unwilling to explore the alternatives.)

I was willing to learn from anyone who was willing to teach me; I read books all of the time;

and took advice from people who were closer to where I wanted to be; and ignored advice from people who did not understand where I was trying to go. I became obsessed with learning about creating value; selling that value; and improving the teams and communities that I worked in. I became totally committed to my own success; and did not what either of the two families that I had lived with had. My girlfriend (who was to become my first wife) thought it was crazy that I spent all of my off time trying to learn about other computer and business things. She taught me something that I had never considered before; she could not imagine life outside of her current circumstances; and I could not imagine long term life inside of mine. It is important to realize that where we are is only our current position in the universe; and is neither our final destination or a trap to keep us from getting to it. Where we are is the place that we need to build a roadmap from; and the place from which we must begin envision our future.

I was lucky enough to have caught the attention of individuals who were farther along my road than I was; and they worked with me to glimpse a possible future that was more attractive than the one I was currently working towards. I left radio shack with 7 other individuals who were computer specialists; to work in one of the first computer and home office stores in a major retail outlet. It was a prototype store concept that we made so successful that it was replicated nationwide. It was really interesting to participate in inventing and executing a possible future.

While I worked for a large retailer company; and made a name for myself; I had caught the startup bug. I left that company to go to work for another startup as a risk taking partner. After a little over two years; I left that business partnership because it did not meet the combination of the financial and emotional requirements to make it interest. In making the decision to leave that startup with a complete loss of my investment; I realized that it was more important to have a combination package of workplace happiness; job satisfaction; and financial reward. It was important to create a situation for life balance where one could feel rewarded for there efforts.

The next company that I went to work for was closer to a work life balance; but did not make the entire package. While I did meet my best friend; my wife; and a large number of people I still call friends; and got a great deal of knowledge about the computer software startup business it did not meet all of my life goals. In the end I had to choose between my job and my future wife; I chose well, and sided with the future wife over the job. That company is long since dead; and the best friend still is my best friend; and the wife still putting up with me 15 years later.

In February 1994; just before valentines day my best friend; and the CEO of the company that I was working for terminated my employment for making a life choice between my fiancée and my job. A few months later he sold the company and we began working on a definition of acceptable work-life balance. During that time frame I participated in the management teams of two back to back hyper-growth startups. Two years in a row I joined a software company of less than 10 employees and assisted in growing them to having over 100 employees each.

After I left the second hyper growth company; I started my own “.com” to build my own lifestyle company. I spent a few years doing my own startup; until we had in-fact created just such an environment.

While I would never have predicted exactly where I would end up; I did find a way to move step by step to establishing a lifestyle that matched my goals and objectives. Today, I work with people that I really like. I have the freedom to peruse my interests; I create value; and have worked to establish a platform to give me the ability and freedom to execute my future

opportunities, interests, goals and objectives.

If I had not learned to invest in my future, and work both hard and smart – I would not have the opportunities I have before me today. I would not be able to share these opportunities with my friends and co-workers. If I had bought into the limited vision of the “trade hours for dollars” of my ex-wife's family I would not have pursued my options and learned to accomplish my goals. If my parents had taught me to work the welfare system, I might have exploited my early injury; and found myself trapped and struggling at the bottom of society. If I had not committed to a vision, identified where I wanted to get to next, developed a plan to get to the next step, and executed that plan and repeated the process on a regular basis; I would not be here today.

It would be very easy to allow your children to set their goals too low; or to get by with whatever comes along; instead of teaching them to invest in the long term benefits of planning, hard work and values.

Chapter VIII

Your word: it commits you; restricts you; and defines you – treat it with great respect.

Based on my experience; the true measure of a man will be taken by his own reckoning in the last microsecond of his existence. While I do believe in a supreme being; and a final judgment; I believe that my supreme being will consider my life “in context and perspective”. I do not believe that at my judgment the question will be did you violate the law “Thou shalt not kill” as much as I will be judged on the question of “Did Thou st commit murder.” The subtleties are different but great. If my role at some point in my life I were to become an executioner for the state as part of a jury that did convict a serial killer and sentence him to death; I might be guilty of “Thou shalt not kill” but I would not be guilty of the more strict interpretation of “thou shalt not commit murder.” According to the Bible not all killing, the taking of a life, is murder. Murder is the unlawfully taking of human life.

The subtleties of the law can be boiled down to a series of rules that direct us to respect our god, our family, our communities and our selves. When we evaluate the law; either natural, divine, or proscribed by our communities we are constantly put into situations by which we must at every opportunity select which has precedence. It is how those choices are evaluated and carried out that I believe will dictate how I will measure my existence in my final moment. At the end of my life; I will regret the people that I did not help; the family obligations that I did not meet; the friends that I did not support; and the rules that I did not protest for the betterment of society. The law is not absolute; it is a guide to evaluating the situations we find ourselves in on a daily basis. I may some day be required to speed to take someone who is dying to the hospital. There are so many situations test the balance between simple right and wrong; and it is in those decisions that our true character is tried and discovered.

As previously discussed; I have been instructed to “do the right thing” a great many times in my life; but as I have gotten older; I have realized that identifying the right thing is much harder. If I were to simply use the limits imposed by the law; I might not steal; but I might push the limits of usury and participate in “predatory lending practices” against the poor and ignorant; like large banks and corporations have been doing in the early years of the 21st century. I might not participate in extortion; but I might use my influence to gain a competitive edge in some business situation. I might not lie; but I might knowingly spread information based on questionably acquired facts to accomplish some goal. All of these situations; while not actually stepping over the line are based on decisions directed by our moral compass.

Where would we all be if the President of the United States started a war, and actually knew that there were no weapons of mass destruction; that would be wrong; right? But; what if we were asked to consider if there MIGHT be weapons of mass destruction? Would it be OK then; for the greater good? It is our obligations and ultimately our word that will guide many of us to make “our right decision.” Notice I did not say or imply that there is “a right decision” or “the right decision” no; I said - “our right decision.” Each situation that we make a decision about will need to be evaluated based on our own rules; values; and principals.

For me; as I get older it keeps getting easier. My moral compass has realized that “the greater good” is magnetic north; and will guide my decisions. The next indicator for my compass is what was the letter, spirit and intension I had when entering into plans; decisions; and commitments. Another indicator I have is – has some situation, external

circumstance, or withheld information impacted the original basis of my plans; decisions; and commitments. I also have to consider what is the eventual outcome of my decisions, and who are the beneficiaries of my decisions in both a positive and negative manner; were any of those outcomes unanticipated ? And the final gauge of my decision making process is – “If I were making this decision in the light of day; and accountable to explain my behavior to both my family; friends and enemies would I be proud of the decision I am making right now with the best information I have at this moment in time.”

I have gotten to the point in my life that I try not to second guess myself. I make decisions; and I adapt to the situations that arise based on the decisions that I have made. I may not get the decisions right; but at least I live in a way that allows me to live unashamed based on doing the best I can with where I am at any point and time in my life. I have learned that I can not change my past. I can not dictate my future; I can only deal with this decision; this moment; this instant in my journey and the rest will sort it self out.

My friend Joe OBrein (the chief of police) tells me that as a police officer; that is your “stock in trade” and it is all that you have; and as a public official I find it very much the same. I am going to make bad decisions all of the time; but I have to make those with the conviction that given the same details and options; I would make it again the exact same way. I feel the same way about giving my word.

I hear people talking about integrity all of the time; I do not believe that a man truly knows the metal of his integrity until faced with a life changing decision; that will in some way alter his reality; in a way that he has desired and strives for; where all that he has to do is betray his own given word and bond. It is in the moments of contemplation and reflection on that moment; that a man can then truly measure his comments to integrity and convictions.

Chapter IX

"We are born with two fears, loud noises and falling. All other fears are learned through either experience and advice."

I recently took my wife to the Haunted House Theme Park located in our community. As part of their procedure for tracking patrons, the hand stamp each guest with a rubber ink stamp. My wife held her hand out and had it stamped without incident, but I told the girl at the counter that I do not accept hand stamps. I never allow anyone to stamp my hand. It had been nearly two years since my father has been dead but it was just like he was standing there beside me, reminding me that "I should never allow anyone to mark my hands." I have not accepted a hand stamp in as long as I can remember. I do not let my children have their hands stamped when I am with them. When my children come home from school or another event and I find that they have had their hands stamped I get the physically uncomfortable reaction of being sick to my stomach. I often make them immediately wash the mark off. To this day I do not even allow my children to use faux tattoos, at least when I am around.

The only reason that I have for this reaction is the paranoia of my father and his aversion to having his hand stamped or his body otherwise marked. I will not get a tattoo; nor would I have even considered dating a girl that had a tattoo. I have had very vocal arguments about not wanting to "allow" my wife to get a tattoo if she wanted one (while I have learned that my wife makes her own decisions - and I have to accept those decisions, since she is an individual not property that I can control making the decision hers, and hers alone.) Tattoos and hand stamps were a gigantic fear passed on to me from my dad, not genetically but by environmental influences. For years there have been questions about the impact of Nature vs. Nurture on the influence of children; but when the intersection of Nature and Nurture conspire to create artificial fear and bias that fear can be as real as gravity in the mind of the influenced individual. While the stated reasons for the fear of being marked has a level of justification that pass a basic test of rationality based on historical facts and religious beliefs, the actual reality of my fear has nothing to do with either of these concerns. My fear is purely the creation of my father; who passed his fear and paranoia not biologically, but purely by conditioning and upbringing. This set of fears were contrived, justified and applied to both a historical context and a religious context. My father had noted that religious persecution of the Jews in Germany, and "the Mark of the Beast" in the Bible book of Revelations included the marking of individuals as a precursor to persecution, and therefore we should protest all types of markings of individuals as a defense mechanism.

As I consider what appears to be a completely irrational fear from a logical perspective, nothing changes about the way that it makes me feel. I still refuse to have my hand stamped. I still get tense when my children have their hands stamped, and yet there is no logical basis for this fear. I know that the stamping of my or my children's hands at a theme park is not a precursor to imprisonment. The teachers at our children's school are not out to cart them off to concentration camps, or send them off as victims of the Antichrist (at least not as long as we send them to a catholic school.) Yet this fear that I have learned persists. I feel its effects every single time I see a marked hand in my house. All of my logic says that this fear is irrational and yet it is as real to me as any other fear that I have ever learned.

My nurture has wired a number of fears into my head that I will undoubtedly pass on to my children. I am not saying that passing on our fears, bias and prejudice to our children is new, or

necessarily bad. We need to pass on fears and lessons as long as it is done with forethought and in a way that makes them better and stronger individuals. It is a good idea for me to teach my children that jumping off of a roof is a bad idea; since they might get hurt by the sudden stop at the bottom; but I do not think that I should be encouraging them to eliminate potential life partners based on tattoos. I do not wish to encourage bias based on gender which was acceptable as little as 100 years ago. I do not wish to encourage racial bias, although just a two generations ago, that would have been an acceptable practice. I do not wish to encourage bias based on sexual preference or orientation, although that was an acceptable practice when I was growing up. I do not wish to encourage fear based on anything that is not real and tangible. I do not want my children to be scared of ghosts - while my lovely wife thinks that the case for ghosts is still open to debate. I want my children to use fear as an early warning system to keep them from making bad life choices, not as a chain to restrict their behavior.

I have many irrational fears, and will probably spend many of the upcoming years of my life finding ways to overcome them. But I will endeavour to be aware that my children will learn to fear what I fear. So I will not fear wearing pink. I will not fear standing up for the rights of others who are being mistreated for risk of being embarrassed. I will not fear singing badly because someone else might judge my voice. I will not fear dancing for fear that someone will laugh at me. I will not fear trying because I might fail. I will not fear questioning a strongly held belief that might no longer serve the needs of society simply because that is the way that it has always been. Some of the most insidious behaviors of our society are based on behaviors or prejudice that we do not realize are painful to others.

There are almost unnoticed prejudices made by young people based on concepts like socio-economic class structure, intelligence, athletic ability, physical appearance, learning ability, or other social acceptance criteria. While those prejudices are not the focus of legislation; or school discipline they are the potential fruits abused by our children, and should be discouraged at all cost. If we are displaying these characteristics to our children, then we are conditioning our children to not only find them acceptable, but to propagate their negative impact to future generations.

The best legacy that I can leave my children on the topic of fear is that "I will endeavour to work to make sure that those around me are not subject to my irrational fears; and will do my best to condition myself not to be chained to the irrational fears of my father or his father or his father before him."

Chapter X

‘Hallmark, when you care enough to send the very best...’

Hallmark has their branding down to convincing you that a card is a great way to celebrate holidays. My wife Rhonda is really into sending cards for the holidays. In her family it would be considered a big tradition. In my upbringing I would say that it was given limited value. My father would not only not send cards, but would say all year long that anyone who really knew him would stuff a dollar in an envelope and mail it for his birthday or any other card holiday.

We inherit our values from parents, friends and colleagues. I can’t think of how my social and family circle was into sending or giving cards until I met my wife Rhonda. I have to admit that she was very forgiving of me when I did not get her cards (or even consider them) regularly on holidays. I would always try to remember special dates, and get her gifts that would be interesting to her, but searching for just the right card and just the right message was never one of my values. I would prefer to get a gift certificate or something else that I thought she would enjoy. I did not value or enjoy the process of going out to get a sensitive and special card. Come to think of it, I would guess that sensitivity was not really a big deal in my upbringing.

I can recall with great clarity that I did not get a card for my high school graduation. But I can remember the big argument about it. I got an envelope with money for a suit, but he had no intention of giving me a card or attending. To be honest, I do not recall if my father attended my high school graduation; but I know he was not planning on it when I left the house. It was not important to him, and he thought that he did not need to go; I was grateful to my mother that she came to my graduation; and I know that she was there. I appreciated that recognized that it was a significant achievement, and I did appreciate the envelope with money in it, to be honest I probably would still have the card, if he had written it. I did have a suit and was dressed for the occasion, but who would notice under my cap and gown anyway. I do not think that he even knew how board or frustrated I was in school. He just thought than I should go and get a GED and graduate early. But to me it was a very special day, a reason for a sense of accomplishment; but what I remember most about that day is that he could not be bothered to show up. But that was neither the first nor would it be the last time.

My father would not participate in my wedding to Rhonda either. It was not that he did not like Rhonda, he thought she was terrific. He just had no desire or intention to participate in the process. He would not even be bothered to honor Rhonda’s request to complete a list of family members that he wanted invited to the wedding from his side of the family. Not a one of my father’s 8 sisters or even his mother were never invited to my wedding. He could not be bothered to care about participating in the process and completing an invitation list. For

years there were questions about why none of them were invited, and in a fine Lambert family tradition, I said, I did not have the addresses since I don't keep a Christmas card list. While I am disappointed that he did not show up, and I am disappointed that I did not invite a single member of his side of the family to our wedding, we did keep a seat open for him just in case he changed his mind. It was a lovely wedding ceremony, and one of the happiest days of my life, but neither my wife nor I ever got to read the card.

I do not think that my father had set a good example as a role model for Hallmark moments. I have often been told that it is the thought that counts. Hallmarks marketing message of "When you care enough to send the very best" is well known so what does it mean you care so little that you can't be bothered. I can assure you that if you forget to call on his birthday, fathers day, or veterans it would not go without being mentioned. And "god help you" if on his birthday you did not at least send him a dollar in an envelope; for you would surely hurt his feelings.

If it is really the thought that counts, my life is full of a great many thoughts of good wishes for friends and family. It was not until being married to Rhonda that we have gotten into sending Christmas cards. Rhonda and I receive a great many cards from family and friends, and she goes to the effort of finding that "special family card", or creating "a personalized card" to send to people. For me it was not part of part of my history or even my value structure, until she shared it with me. We all learn to value certain things based on our upbringing. For my children sharing holiday cards has become an important tradition to them and to us as a whole family. Each of my 3 daughters picked out and signed Christmas cards for all of their friends. To my family reminding others with a special message that "you are being thought of and considered" is important to them and has become part of their value system and tradition. My girls have learned from their mother that they feel special when being recognized by a that special card. They now treat with great respect sending Valentines Day cards, birthday cards, and memorializing other family events.

It is not necessarily the things that we do, but the things that we don't do that leave lasting impressions. When we fail to fulfill the expectations of those who rely on us as part of their support structure, it can have long term consequences on their self image, behavior and values. Others will evaluate their perceptions of level of importance by the way that we recognize and acknowledge what they consider important. It is said that customers "vote with their dollars" as a measure of satisfaction. The measure of satisfaction, praise, and recognition that people feel from family and friendship networks is often measured based on the emotional value system of the recipient. In these situations casting votes of praise, accomplishment, and satisfaction may be done in a much simpler and more meaningful ways. The long term impacts of proper praise and recognition will ultimately be judged by the recipient of that attention and be reflected in their own attitudes about the world and ultimately in their self image.

So if you really do care enough to give the very best, make a commitment to understand how those around you expect praise and recognition. Be aware of how your actions, decisions, judgments, and behaviors are reflected both positively and negatively in their long term attitudes and self image. Find ways to meet or exceed their expectations; while at the same

time preventing long term frustration, doubt or dissatisfaction because of your unintended actions or inactions.

Chapter XI

"When I was your age Pluto was a planet."

I have heard that the only constant in the universe is change; it is useful to consider that the more things change, the more things stay the same. Conflict or misunderstanding between parents and children has always arisen from changes in values based on where we are in our developmental cycles. As a parent, I have significantly different values than I did as a child or teenager, but I suspect that much of that would have been different if I had been better equipped to participate in the world. When I was young, I considered so many of the yardsticks in my life to have measured me a failure. I was too short, too fat, too smart, too this, and too that. Ultimately, I was too unloved and unlovable. The first time that I came into contact with someone who apparently would love me for me, I fell in love and got married. When the novelty wore off, the whole thing fell apart. Like Dorothy in the "Wizard of Oz," I needed a journey and adventure to realize that there is no place like home.

I guess my biggest fear is that my children might believe that they are not loved; or not good enough because of the things that I say or do. It is so easy to fall into a trap of saying things that you do not mean that may have impact on them for years to come. We must teach our children that they are acceptable "just as they are." We must separate who they are from what they do by saying, "I love you and always will, but I don't like your behavior or find it acceptable." We must praise our children and be positive when they do well. We must encourage our children when they fail, and thank them for trying their best. We must accept that while we may influence their values, we cannot control their decisions. We must set expectations that are reasonable and boundaries that are clear and consistent. As they get older, we (WHO) must endeavor to remember that when we were young, this is what they (WHO) said about us:

I suppose my biggest fear is that my children too will fall prey to the same faulty cognitive patterns that I did when I was their age.

"The world is passing through troublous times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they knew everything, and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness with them. As for the girls, they are forward, immodest and unladylike in speech, behavior and dress."

It sounds so familiar but that was written some 700 years ago, but it was not the first time such sentiments were presented. In the Eighth Century Hesiod was quoted as saying:

I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words. When I was a boy, we were taught to be discrete and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly wise and impatient of restraint.

For generations the parents of children have seen the youth of their day as being less

mature, less restrained, and less wise than they were at that age. I wish to admonish you (WHO) that while we (WHO) may remember the past fondly and differently, many of the fundamentals remain the same--it is only the definitions have changed. If we are not careful, we risk teaching our children to value themselves by unrealistic yard sticks. They could measure themselves against the unrealistic expectations that we have set for them; without even knowing that we set them. They will see, learn and acquire our fears, our bias, and our prejudice. They may even pass those on dysfunctional behavior to their children as they have been taught that these behaviors are "the right thing to do" despite having been able to maintain the standard themselves.

*expert
*parents
*yardsticks

Are we, as a society, ready to admit that our children deserve a better value system than the one imposed on us by our parents who did not know any better? Do we need to impose value systems on our children so that they will need to spend years in therapy to eliminate?

It is important that above all else, we inspire our children to be the best that they can be, and encourage them to use their own potential as the yardstick. [FOSTER] They must be taught to value competition against their own personal best performance as more important than measuring their success against the performance of others. We must encourage our children to be the best individuals that they can be and strive to improve themselves, their communities, and their society by learning to measure those things based on improving where we are now, and where we can be in the future. Above all else, we must learn to love, unconditionally. We must accept that "being loved and accepted for who we are - just as we are" is an essential need of every individual.

*MBIEL FAILURE TEACH
*PERFECTIONISM

I was once admonished by a wise old tent revival preacher on relationships:

When your wife's feet hurt take her to the podiatrist, because if you don't she will think you don't love her. If she thinks you don't love her she will need to see a psychiatrist. She will want to see the psychiatrist more often and the psychiatrist is much more expensive. So as a practical matter of cost and over all happiness, take care of the problem once and early.

Billy Joe Clegg

The same lesson can applied to our children. Lets fix our children's problem early, before they need therapy.

***THERAPY**
-periods at end of bullets or not

Teach them that...

- **Teach them that relationships are complicated.**
- **Teach them that people say stupid things that they do not mean**
- **Teach them that well meaning and wise sounding people like Billy Joe have a habit of also saying ignorant and hurtful things like "I am going to eliminate 'queers' and 'homos' and 'pornos' and 'pinkos'." and should be summarily**

disregarded when they do.

- Teach them that being different is the key to individuality; we do not all start off this life from the same place. Rather, we all start with a different set of circumstances, and it is not where we start from but where we have come to that makes us who we are.
- Teach them that it is not what they do when people are watching, but what they do when no one is watching that defines character
- Teach them that "there is nothing like family and there is no place like home"

and Last but not least -

As I learned from my two Dr Seuse friends, we must all learn to accept



Teach them that it's always one thing or another, but things are what they are.
And, the only good measure of ourselves are the things really we care about!

**Today you are you,
That is truer than true.
There is no one alive
Who is Youer than You.
--Dr. Seuss**