
BEING YOURSELF
A JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE



Written by Mark Millan

Being Yourself



Table of Contents

Who cares about your Story - How this became a Thing	5
What was the neighborhood you grew up in like?	7
How did your parents pick your name?	13
What did you read as a child?	15
What was your Mom like when you were a child?	19
Where did you go on vacations as a child?	31
What did you hide from your parents as a child?	37
Are you more like your father or your mother? In what ways?	39
My Earliest Jobs lead me to my Current Job	41
Vehicles of My Life	49
One of your Favorite places?	63
What would you consider Your motto?	75
What were your favorite subjects in high school?	77
What was your first Big Trip?	81
What did your children teach you over the years of raising them?	85
Did anyone in the family play a part in history with a capital H?	93
What are your biggest influences in life?	97

Table of Contents

What famous people have you met and how did you meet them?	109
What about being a child do you miss the most?	113
Aunts and Uncles of our lives	117
How do you make difficult decisions, like when to change jobs?	123
What is your best advice when it comes to raising children?	125
What was your best boss like?	129
How has your life turned out differently than you imagined it would?	137
What would you say to your children if you only had a few days to live?	143

Who cares about your Story - How this became a Thing



It was during the 2020 pandemic at Christmas time, my 3 kids got together and gifted what appeared to be a simple writing project to me and my wife, Sue. We each had to respond to questions about our lives that came to us every other week via email.

Being Yourself

It was a cool idea, as there was not a lot to do during the isolation and quarantining of the seeming endless Covid threat. People were becoming ill and passing on randomly. I think it caused everyone to look at what they were doing and viewing their life in a new light. It was a sad and trying time for many and vaccinations were just starting to make their way through the population.

When the writing began I fell into a journey back in time. The way back machine... recalling small details I wanted to share about my parents (who my kids never got to meet) and about myself. Crazy things I had never shared with them before. This became the vehicle to do that. And somewhere in the back of my mind, it felt like an opportunity to leave a piece of me behind... for them, and their children. Right, just in case.

A year later in December of 2021 the Covid virus continued its wrath but I was determined to finish this book and gift it back to each of them in a hard copy.

What was the neighborhood you grew up in like?



There are two neighborhoods I remember growing up in. One was in Campbell near Bucknell elementary school, where I went to kindergarten and 1st grade. Now it is a high tech mecca area; Apple, Google, eBay have all invaded the neighborhood I first grew up in.



Apple headquarters in Campbell where I grew up. It was mainly orchards back then. No apples though, mainly cherries and apricots.

Being Yourself

I remember playing in the yard meeting my first girlfriend. Debbie DeMars. I did not know what a girlfriend was, but she was my friend who lived next door and happened to be about my size. We played cowboys and indians, and I remember drinking water from the gutter like I saw on TV. I think I got in trouble for that. I didn't know it was dirty water it was running water, so I thought it must've been clean. Anyway, Tonto and the Lone Ranger, they drank like that so of course I did too. Who knew years later I become an expert on water and that that water was probably full of pesticides from lawns sprayed with who knows what. I came out okay though, I occasionally still drink whiskey, which for all we know may be worse than gutter water.

I do recall in our neighborhood back then, that the parents always gathered together and did stuff together. It was pretty fun. It was the first time I ever conceived of the idea of community. I do recall one particular instance when we had a big storm. We lived in a small house (probably only three-bedrooms) and at the time my parents probably five kids. So, we all would hide in the lower bunk bed of my sisters' room while lightning struck, I remember us all huddled together there. Our parents were in another room and we were like on our own in a little tent - lightning striking. We'd scream every now and then and run down the hall to our parents. It was a bonding experience. And to this day we still huddle when shit happens.

Being Yourself



The house we grew up in Willow Glen. Note the price \$25,000. :)

Another neighborhood I remember was growing up in Willow Glen. So many memories in that house all the neighborhood kids. We would play hide and go seek in the summer months for hours. I think at one time we also played capture the flag. That became one of my favorite games. And then there were the apricot fights, the prune fights, where we would throw baby produce at one another right off the trees.



Me and neighbor, Gary Julianni, he punched me out one day in a fight over who knows what. A King of Jungle moment from what I recollect.

Being Yourself

I do recall when the Beatles first movie came out we used to play we were the Beatles. We had seen the movie, A Hard Day's Night, and we would all run to different porches pretending our fans were chasing us. And then there was the guys who played army. We had all kinds of neighbor backyards where we would dig up the yards, build trenches and fake fight. There were TV's shows like Combat with Vic Morrow. We used to paint our faces, get all dirty. Even though we all played with guns none of us ever had real guns - ever. Glad we got that out of our system when we were kids.

There was also roller skates and skateboards interestingly. The first skateboard I ever had was taking my old roller skates, beating the crap out of them, and nailing them to a 2 x 4, and skating down the sidewalk. That led to a series of other innovations. Keep in mind, this is before you could buy a skateboard at a store. From there we went on to skim boards. I remember us cutting round circles out of plywood, painting them cool colors and going to the beach. Skim boarding was really fun and that a course led some to surfing like my brother Al did. He was a really good surfer as was my neighbor, Dennis Brian. They both surfed well into their later years.

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Me, Al, and my mom out front one day trying to keep the dog in the yard. We lived on Pine Ave, it was a busy street.

All in all, growing up in a neighborhood was the first experience of being part of a tribe there was a pecking order. There was size, there was who was the meanest, who was the fairest. Who was the best baseball player (Sharon Aickley, she could pitch and hit a ball better than any of us.) There was who could beat up on who, you know the King of the Jungle.

It wasn't long before as we got older we started playing musical instruments. My neighbor Dennis played the drums, and we all started playing guitars. He even showed up years later in Sacramento when we all played at the Elks Club for Al's birthday. And the rest is, well history.

Being Yourself



In our backyard on Pine Ave, another backyard BBQ no doubt!

How did your parents pick your name?



Well, I'm not exactly sure but I do know my father always used to say this, "Marcus Aurelius - clean your room!" Or, "Marcus Aurelius go mow the lawn!" - "How are you Marcus Aurelius, my little warrior!" He would have me believe that I was named after the warrior, Marcus Aurelius. However, my mother never, ever, referred to me in that way. So not exactly sure...



Marcus was a Roman emperor from 161 to 180AD and a Stoic philosopher. He was the last of the rulers known as the Five Good Emperors and the last emperor of the Pax Romana (27 BC to 180

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AD), an age of relative peace and stability for the Roman Empire. Thank God!

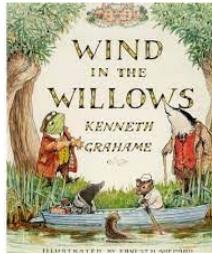
Now let's see, I was born in 1953. We've had relative peace and stability. At least so far... And I have had little if not anything to do with that, so not willing to take any credit or blame. After all what is in a name anyway?

“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”, according to Shakespeare. Not that I am sweet by any stretch. But I am a Mark by any other name and would still be me. Thanks Dad!

What did you read as a child?

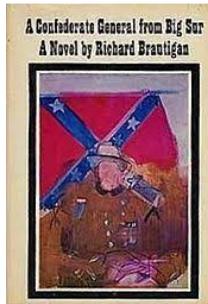


At first I was not much of a reader. I do remember in the fifth or sixth grade I had a teacher that made me read the *Wind in the Willows*. That book made me fall in love with reading – after that I had an insatiable appetite.



When I was sick with the Mumps as a young teenager I couldn't leave the house for like 2 to 3 weeks. I don't think I could even leave my bedroom. I was like quarantined. So, I read *The Hobbit* and the entire Trilogy – *The Lord of the Rings*. Straight through no breaks.

Being Yourself



I read all kinds of books. Some of my favorites in high school were written by Richard Brautigan. *A Confederate General from Big Sur* was one of my favorites. In *Watermelon Sugar*, and the whole lot of his works. I read a wide range of books including Dostoevsky – the Russian novelist. I read *The Brothers Karamazov* before I was out of high school. I read a lot of Asian and Eastern thought books in my later high school years and while traveling in Europe in 1972. I was fascinated by the philosophical differences between the East and the West; Alan Watts, Gurdijeff, Krishnamurti. I used to fast, and drink juices only – carrot juice mainly. For several days at a time. I was like a monk. Fasting and reading.

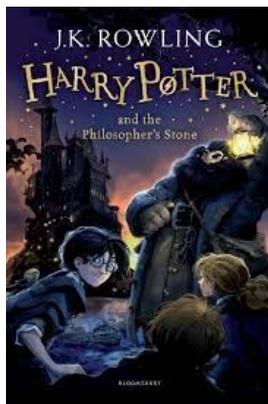
I soon got over that though as I had to get work and had a variety of jobs. I suppose it's interesting that I became an Associate Publisher at Arts & Leisure Publications. There I had to read tons of articles written by our reporters and writers. My favorite part of that job was cover designs and making up the word clips that go on the covers of magazines. The quick bullets,

Being Yourself

the catch phrases that grab people's attention to get them to buy it off the rack, or flip the page and delve inside. That was challenging but fun for me and felt very creative.

In high school I took a speed reading class - don't ask me why. I just did it. That helped me be able to read even quicker. Fast forward to today, I skim through five newspapers every morning for my work on water. I also read research journals. I do it all using speed reading techniques I learned eons ago and reading online makes it even go faster. I do still love to read books though and I seem to sit and will plow through a book I am stuck on blazing through it a day or two. No breaks. Like a sponge absorbing water.

When our kids were little I read them all the books in the Harry Potter series. I have to say that was really fun in so many ways. I hope they enjoyed them. I know I did!



Being Yourself

What was your Mom like when you were a child?



My Mom was tough as nails, she was a Taurus born on May 1st. Smoked cigarettes and occasionally swore in exasperation at 6 rowdy kids she had little control over. Oddly, there were a couple things she did that to this very day I still do.

Being Yourself



She drank three or 4 cups of coffee every single morning and she played solitaire by herself with a real deck of cards. There was no digital anything back in those days. Course for me, I play solitaire digitally and I have played hundreds



of rounds especially since I broke my collarbone. I was able to play with one hand on my iPad. And I still do!

The other thing that my Mom did was she laughed. She laughed very loud and sometimes with uncontrollable snorting. Really. I think she loved laughing at things us kids would come up with. She was always amazed by all of us.

Being Yourself



She said one time that out of six kids you never know what you're gonna get. You could have one of everything out of six, ...all walks of life. Could you imagine having six children today? I cannot even fathom it.

When very young, I would play with blocks and build huge forts. I would spend hours creating these elaborate settings with all my toys, like building a castle or a town using everything, and I'd play for hours. Only to be disrupted by my younger brother Gary. He would come in like a tornado and destroy everything I had created. I would scream bloody murder and my mother would come to my rescue and send Gary to whatever worked as an indoor prison back in those days. Then I would go about rebuilding whatever it was I had created.

Being Yourself

I suppose there are many things I could thank my mother for; learning how to make tacos and enchiladas; learning how to laugh; learning how to be brave in the face of very trying circumstances. That was probably one of the harder things. I say that because my Mom felt that all the boys were too sensitive, and she wished we were tougher, harder. It wasn't till later in life that I learned what that meant. It's like when you have to fire someone from a job - it's hard. I got better at it later, much later. And even though I may have developed a bit of a harder side, I was like my Mom who had that softer side, inside. The sensitivity to care for others, do the right thing, stand up for what you believe is right, and putting money where you believe it mattered the most.



It started when I was very young, I put money into things. I remember as a little boy at Halloween there were these candies like Sugar Babies, where you could save money toward things and I would save all of mine and then figure out how to use that money in some ways, like to buy Christmas presents for my siblings. The fact that I went through all that effort was reminiscent of my mother's practice. She used to collect S&H stamps. Not stamps like you use to mail with, but what they

Being Yourself

called Green Stamps. She would put all the stamps in these books. Sometimes we would all fight to be able to help her. She would then redeem them to get something for us kids ...that was how she got by. This grew into more things later.

My father was not a prolific saver and with six kids you could just imagine how expensive that must have been. So, during the harvest season, my mother would load us all into a rickety old station wagon and we'd drive out to the Almaden Valley and cut apricots to raise money for our school clothes. It was quite an adventure really. Most of the people were Hispanic. My brother Al used to sing songs and they would all laugh at him. But I could tell they secretly enjoyed it. We all enjoyed it. And in the end, we all got new school clothes from that money. That's how my mother rolled.



Also, she used to sing. She wasn't a great singer, but she was funny. She would sing to her leg of lamb while it cooked in the oven. We would all gather around laughing our heads off as she'd

Being Yourself

start singing to this piece of meat in the oven. She would do it and she wouldn't stop, and we couldn't stop laughing either.



When I was in high school, I used to make things out of leather like belts and bags. I would sell them at art fairs and stores. I worked in the garage. I had a little shop there; my friend Jeff Tracy used to come and help me. It's funny but I made so much money doing that that I bought a car, a Volkswagen bug. We used to call it the Brother Bug. I'm sure my mother marveled at that.



Being Yourself



Once I graduated from high school though I decided to go to Europe with two friends. I ended up selling the Brother Bug so I would have enough money to fly over and travel around Europe for a few months. It was my mother who drove us to the airport. Back in those days there was airline called Pan Am, “The Only Way to Fly”. Could you imagine being a mother and dropping your kid off at the airport at just 18 years old, never been anywhere before, going to foreign countries you had never been to. In those days there was no Internet, there were no cell phones. The best I could do was send postcards to her and my Dad which arrived weeks and weeks later. It was the only way they could keep track of me. Although I did call my Mom from an island in Greece, Sifnos, on Halloween one night. We were drunk out of our minds on Retsina, we each called our moms. I don’t know why. But she must have been thrilled to hear my voice and to know that I was still alive.



Being Yourself

When I came back from Europe, I did continue my work in leather and got really good at it. Even learned how to make clothes out of leather and fur. I also started selling leather clothes at big shows in Los Angeles and San Francisco ...and eventually New York. I remember being in New York for the first time just overwhelmed by how big EVERYTHING was. I remember calling my Mom from there and letting her know how things were going. I know she was so proud of her little son in New York working in the fashion industry. I was probably 20 years old, if that. She had told my aunts how proud she was, I learned later after she had passed from my Aunt Lil and my Aunt Thelma. It was a small thing, but I'm glad that she was happy with what I was doing.



Being Yourself



I also recall driving in the car with my Mom to a lot of places. You know like, to the doctor's office sometimes I used to share a car with her in high school and drive her to her work, to the doctors. She worked mainly because she wanted her own money. She didn't like being dependent on my father. So, she had a job selling tickets to concerts. It turned out to be a residual benefit for some of us kids because every now and then we would get tickets to a really cool rock show.



But then she got sick, she had been a diabetic and she smoked cigarettes. A lot of them, 3 to 4 packs a day. Tareyton's ...I don't even know if they make them anymore. They used to have a

Being Yourself

commercial that said, “I’d rather fight than switch”. So, she always smoked Tareytons. She never smoked anything else. Eventually it caught up with her, so between the diabetes and the smoking she got cancer of the pancreas.



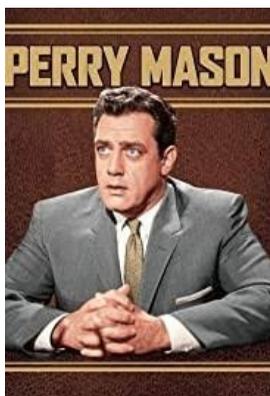
She was the youngest in her family and the first to go. It was incredibly sad for all of us.



She had always loved the movie the Sound of Music. We would watch it like on Easter Sunday or whenever it might be on TV. The whole family used to watch TV right. We would sit around Sunday afternoons watching episodes of Barry Mason with Raymond Burr. It’s funny that later on in life living in Sonoma

Being Yourself

County I should go to Raymond Burr's winery. He used to grow beautiful orchids too, kinda cool.



As my Mom became more ill, I decided to move back home from living in Marin County. I managed to get a house around the corner from their house on Pine Avenue. I lived there with two of my friends. We had a lot of parties; we did a lot of fun things. But I was at home when she finally passed on.

I watch the Sound of Music with her and my younger sister and Uncle Al. It was later that night that she passed away in the middle the night. I remember Uncle Al waking us up and saying it's over. I was just 22 and remember how it marked the end of such a special part of all of our lives.

Being Yourself



Of her grand kids, she only got to hold in her lap, your cousins, Alissa and Shaun. I know she would have dearly loved to have met each one of you though. And I know for sure she would have made you laugh.



Where did you go on vacations as a child?



When I was really little I do recall my mom taking us to a beach called Sea Cliff. It was famous for this cement boat that we could walk out to. We used to fish from it with little drop lines.

But now it is mostly sinking into the ocean. Sadly. But in its day it was quite marvelous with a snack and bait shop and a flurry of tourists.



I still visit that beach to this day.

Being Yourself

When I am working in Santa Cruz I often walk along the beach for exercise, drift down the old wharf to see that sunken treasure... and stay at the Sea Cliff Inn.



There was also a place called Hoberg's in Lake County.



It started decades ago our family of Eight. Yes, Mom, Dad, with 3 boys and 3 girls would venture from Pine Ave in Willow Glen. We'd pile into a station wagon (all 8 of us) and drive to Lake County on winding roads to the family resort called Hoberg's. Occasionally someone would throw up on the way there or the way back. It was a ritual, a rite of passage each summer.

It was located on Cobb Mountain and was an annual event for us for several years. We stayed in a little cottage (more like a house than a cabin). And friends of ours were in adjoining cottages. It was like a little village and we (my parents actually) seemed to

Being Yourself

know everyone surrounding us. Or if they didn't, they were very good at making friends easily – a trait I think we all carried with us throughout our lives.

I was probably 10 or 11. The Beatles were on the rise and I fancied myself to be like them. I watched a Hard Day's Night and like Ringo, had eight rings on my fingers. All plastic of course. I purchased them at the little souvenir shop just outside the main lobby or dining hall of Hoberg's.



There was a round jovial guy I recalled named Ozzie Coulthart. Ozzie was like the Emperor of Hoberg's. He held court daily ...and nightly. Whether it was calling the numbers for bingo or introducing the dance band. He was the czar of fun and entertainment. Ozzie blew his trumpet to attract crowds and participants to his baseball games and swimming contests. Ozzie took to calling me Ringo. It didn't bother me, but it did stick, and my siblings teased me endlessly. Ringo, Ringo....everyone (even people I didn't know) seemed to call me Ringo that summer.

At night my older sisters and brother would go dancing at one location and those of us under 12 were sequestered with mom

Being Yourself

and dad. So of course we would go where Ozzie was and listen to a quaint combo in the dining hall turned dancing hall. All their friends would be there, and they would all take turns dancing with one another. The band was called The Three Jays.

A power trio for sure. These guys knew every song and the crowd loved them. They played Sinatra and big band favorites as well as contemporary music. Some of us tried to be wall flowers but that did not last long. The Jays would rip into “She was Just 17, you know what I mean...” and all would be raising dust on the dance floor. Even us youngins. It was like a scene from the movie Dirty Dancing but far more innocent, sweet, purely simplistic and loving; at least in the eyes of this young Ringo.

The 3 Jays seemed to represent all of this rolled into one memorable package. My brothers and I years later would joke about the 3 Jays. Oh, I heard that before from the 3 Js, or let’s call our next band the 3 Jays.

Or maybe I’ll name my kids after the 3Js. Really? Funny thing, how the sub-conscious works. It wasn’t till Julia rolled around that it occurred to me. Innocent enough with a Jeff and a Jenna. But with the third we thought of other names like Rachel or Katie. But then we thought of the damage that that might cause. You know with 2 J names and the third was something else. No, it would have to be the 3 J’s for sure. And as it turns out we often

Being Yourself

refer to them as the 3 Js. “Hey, have you heard from any of the J’s?”. Or, “is that J texting?”; “Big J or little J?”. “Are all 3 Js coming to dinner?”



Jenna, Jeff and Julia – the 3 J’s.

There you have it. From Hoberg’s, our happy vacation place. To of course, our 3 J’s. ...and The Three Jays, wherever they may be. How lovely is that?

Being Yourself

What did you hide from your parents as a child?



Not many things, as I'm a Sagittarius. So we tend to wear our feelings on our sleeves. I really doubt remember hiding anything except as a young teenager going to the liquor cabinet and pouring a little bit of each bottle into a glass jar and taking it to the eighth or ninth grade dance. Drink it with my friends on the way. I do think they were wise to this though. They even marked the back of the bottles to see where their liquor was disappearing to. So that was not much of a secret.

Even when a friend of mine got so drunk he rode his stingray bike right down the stairs of the football bleachers. He was a total wreck. But we managed to clean him up, add a few Band-Aids and left him on his back porch. He was fine ...a couple days later.

Being Yourself

Another friend and I did learn how to make hard cider out of apple juice. We would add raisins to it and let it ferment for a couple of days or weeks. Then we would take the raisins out and drink it. It was very high alcohol content. We hid it in my bedroom but now I am wondering if it even smelled. The joke was on us though. When we drank it we got sick as dogs and puked our guts out. So, if they didn't smell the hard cider they sure as hell smelled its after effects. So again, I wasn't very good at hiding much of anything from my parents.



Although, I do remember we had a few great parties when they were out of town...

Are you more like your father or your mother? In what ways?



Although I'm sure my brothers and sisters would say I look more like my father. I feel for certain that I am much more like my mother on the inside.



She was funny and had a great sense of humor. I loved her laugh! She was also highly creative. She was a graphic designer for a while and also did some drafting type of work. I still have her T-square from when she was in college. Eleanor Freitas, it says

Being Yourself

on it. Written in her own handwriting.

I suppose being in public relations as my father was, I write and can occasionally talk pretty well in public as he often did. But in terms of how I think of myself and what I want to be when I grow up, I tend to think I want to be more like my mother, for sure.

We do have much in common actually. Like her, I am a big coffee drinker, several cups a morning. With cream too, thank you! And did I mention Solitaire? That was her pass-time card game and is my as well.

And I know she enjoyed traveling. She did some. I think as she got older though she felt like she wanted to do much more. I am sure it was a challenge with having to care for six kids, kind of hard to get away. I can't even imagine how much that cost in terms of money and life experiences, let alone the strain it may have had on her own life ambitions and on her relationships.

I've always enjoyed traveling though as you know from reading my blogs. But, like her I still want to do more. Much, much more. For me ...and for her too.



My Earliest Jobs lead me to my Current Job



In life there are many things that may shape a person - jobs being but one. And oddly, an important one! I recall a one weekend job I had going door-to-door selling a lawn rejuvenation gimmick (pulling up little lawn plugs) and laughing my head off with a newfound friend, Fast Eddie (an upcoming guitar player). We'd ring a doorbell to make our scripted pitch, glance at one another, and break into hysterical laughter. Eventually we could not even make it to a door, we were laughing so hard. We were fired that afternoon. But had had one of the funniest times of our lives. It was then that I learned to laugh and not take any job so seriously that you could not find a way to laugh.

That led to a nick name I earned years later in a high pressure job publishing Landmark Calendars (while we were being acquired by At-A Glance), they called me "Cool Breeze".

Being Yourself

But my real first job began with picking fruit. I was probably 11 or 12. A neighbor down the street in Willow Glen would take us kids in his pickup truck (huddled in the back of the truck) for the long drive out to the Almaden Valley to pick prunes. We had to meet him at 4 AM. It was freaking freezing. Oddly, I enjoyed picking prunes off the ground. He would shake the trees and we would gather them into buckets on these vast orchards. I came to appreciate growing things. The only downside was when a tarantula would show up and they were roaming the orchards. We'd all scream and our boss neighbor would come running over with a shovel and just smash them to smithereens. Oh my...



I have had an aversion to spiders of any size, or kind, ever since!

But oddly, to this day I grow trees: pomegranates, peaches, cherries, lemons, avocados, and tangerines. Where did that come from?

Another job that I remember that was life changing was my paper route. I had a colorful bike I had painted it in florescent colors. It was during the psychedelic era. My bike was like something you'd probably see now at Burning Man. It literally

Being Yourself

glowed in the dark.



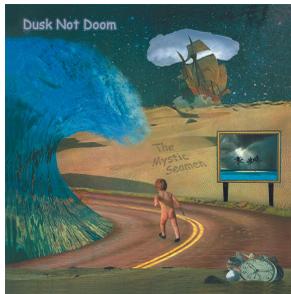
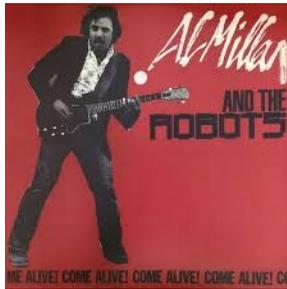
If you've ever had a paper route you know they start incredibly early in the morning 4ish. The streets are deserted and it's a little eerie, but peaceful. My fellow paper boys and I would get a stack of papers dropped off near the high school. We'd sit around like in a campfire circle folding papers, putting rubber bands around them load up our bags and ride off in the darkness to deliver them. Sometimes we literally did light a fire to keep warm, it was so cold.



It was there that I learned how to swear and learned what four lettered words were. One of the guys swore like a sailor and told us the most incredible stories. Taught us all about sex - stuff that we never even conceived of before in our lives. My friend Rod Yoder and I laughed so much. We used to hang out together; his older brother and my older brother both played music. It was

Being Yourself

through his brother that I learned who Bob Dylan was and a new music at the time called Folk-Rock. My exposure to music began in those days and I started learning to play the guitar and writing songs. I tried to learn from my big brother, but he was already years ahead of me in song writing and singing. He performed at coffee houses in San Jose and San Francisco. It led him to numerous bands and a crazy and stifling career in music. But interestingly, he and I have not stopped playing nor publishing music since.



My father was the public relations manager for the Santa Clara County fair. It seemed that every summer all six of my siblings and I got jobs at the county fair. EVERY kind of job you could

Being Yourself

possibly have at a fair; from stuffing envelopes, pasting down newspaper clippings, to selling hot dogs.



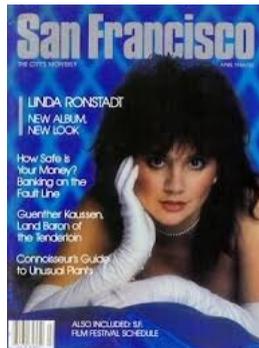
I worked the cotton candy stand one time when a riot broke out. Uncle Al worked at a beer joint not far away. My father had taught us if ever a fight broke out to run away from it. So, my brother Gary and I ran to Al's beer joint. We were there four hours. We could hear the police confront and disburse a bunch of people who had gotten into a knife fight. The whole carnival area was shut down and we were huddled in the beer joint with probably six or seven friends, way too young to be drinking beer, but were certainly out of harm's way.

It was in another year that I sold programs which turned out to be pretty profitable for me. People would tip me all the time cuz I was so little. I think I was maybe 10 or 11 doing this.

I later went on to create playbills for different theater productions in San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and LA. It was

Being Yourself

with a firm called Arts & Leisure Publications. I loved the publishing industry and the whole idea of creating graphical layouts and designs. Writing stories, interviewing people. Probably my most favorite thing was creating covers of magazines. I had done literally hundreds by the late 80s. Some won awards. I could do a whole book just on the amazing stories we worked on, the beautiful magazine covers and taglines that we came up with.

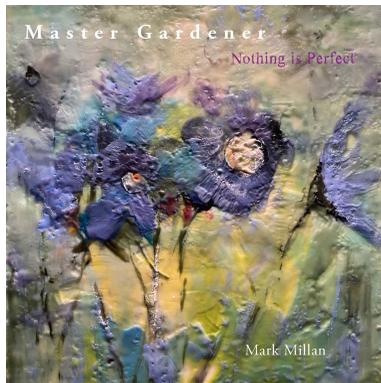


It was just such a creative process. Taking pictures, developing the words that go on covers, the colors. Everything about it was

Being Yourself

fun for me. And to think at a young age I was introduced to the idea just by hawking programs at the county fair for 25 cents apiece.

I guess we just don't know when we start out with jobs where we begin and where we will end up. What influences us, scratches our interest and core, and makes us, us. I have had many more jobs I could talk about and everyone was in some way life-changing. It seems all have led me to my current job where I am the boss, and I get to be creative every single day.



Al

Hey Mark! The Cheery Farmer rocks! I've just skimmed and read parts of this this but wanted to let you know how great it is, and I really enjoy your writing. Really good! Thanks

Being Yourself

Vehicles of My Life



More than a way to get a round...

Most people wouldn't think a car matters that much except for getting from point A to B. But when you're young and just starting out that of course involves having money and possibly a job. In the early days there was this connection between getting a job and having a vehicle. Seems we start our life out on roller skates and eventually graduate to something more comfortable.



Being Yourself

I think back on all the various vehicles I had and it's almost a comical or tragic story of the intricacies of my life unfolding. Even if I went back to when I was a little kid from roller skates to skateboards to bicycles to boxcars to thinking ...oh my God, I really need something to get to work – and I don't want to bum a ride from somebody else. That probably led me to getting a motorcycle in high school to the chagrin of my mom and dad. But boy did I love that machine.



I could go anywhere I wanted, and I did. It was a Honda 350 and my friend, Steve Beamer, had a really nice Triumph. He and I would ride all the way up the Feather River above Orville Dam and we'd camp out, and also visit his cabin at Lake Almanor.



The ride up the Feather River Canyon was awesome and to this day I still relish it. What a beautiful scenic ride but there was one

Being Yourself

time on the way home I was driving on Hwy 80 just before the Benicia Bridge. There was a wind surge, literally blowing me and the bike from one lane to another. Fortunately, there were no cars in that other lane, or I probably wouldn't be telling you this story right now. After that, I immediately pulled over to the side of the road to catch my breath. When I got home a couple hours later, I decided to sell that bike. As much as I loved the freedom, I decided I valued my life more.

It wasn't long before I discovered the Brother Bug - a beat up old VW bug. You probably have heard me write about it before. It's funny because it was really a piece of shit car, but the engine was easy to work on like getting a lawnmower engine to go. And I had a friend who would work on it for me for really cheap. It really needed a paint job, but I couldn't afford one at the time, so my friends and I just wrote on it. I was still in high school; we literally painted the words, "Brother Bug" on it. We also wrote "Go with the Flow". So that was my first car in high school. I remember working on it and doing all the repairs myself. I replaced the front bumper with a wooden bumper, carved it really fancy. For a couple weeks it had no front windshield. We used to drive around and stick our hands right out the front window waving to people with the windshield wipers on. Pretty funny.

Being Yourself



What was cool about the Brother Bug is I could drive it up to San Francisco and park it near Winterland. My friend, John Winston, and I would go see the Grateful Dead and tons of other artists at the time and we wouldn't even lock the car.



We would leave the windows down because people were always breaking into cars there. But nobody ever bothered the Brother Bug, it was almost a shrine to the relevance of automobiles and pleaded, “No need to break into me.”

I decided to paint the Brother and I reupholstered the interior with some weird intricate fabric I had found at a yard sale. I had it painted gold at an auto shop glass at school, so the paint job was a little funky. What's interesting though is I was able to sell that made-over Brother Bug which I paid about \$200 for. I sold it for a little over thousand dollars and I had enough money to go to Europe in the fall of 1972. If it weren't for the Brother Bug and

Being Yourself

the leather bags and belts I had been selling, I don't think I would have ever made that trip to Europe when I was just 18. (Thank you, Brother!)

The cars that followed were pretty interesting, somehow, I managed to find these beat up old vehicles (mostly VWs) on the side of the road. Once I found a Volkswagen bus for really cheap and fixed it up, put a bed in the back, and was able to make trips up to Oregon and Washington. It was fun to have a van, but it did not have much guts and could barely make it over the hill to Santa Cruz. So, had to let her go.

Moving out of my parents' house, I took a more practical view and bought a Volkswagen square back. It was baby blue and I had that one for a few years as I lived in various places. It was great as I could load my stuff up in it and move without having to bother anyone with a truck, so I probably lived in three different places with that car. I also had my leather business going at the time, so it allowed me to load all my equipment and stuff to do my work, go to art fairs and everything. I recall the death of that car unfortunately was in Marin County, in Forest Knolls. I had been making several trips back and forth from Forest Knolls to Willow Glen as my mother was ill. And of course, those of you who have had Volkswagens know you need to religiously add oil to them, or they will blow up. That's what happened to mine, the engine blew as I forgotten to add the secret ingredient. Big

Being Yourself

bummer! And I left it at some garage in Forest Knolls, who knows who has it now. But I didn't have the money to repair it, so I hitched hike back to Willow Glen and again found myself carless in my early 20's.

By then I was living around the corner from my parents as my mother was severely ill with pancreatic cancer. My father had this dodgy Dodge Duster which was really a piece of shit car. But he let me drive it while I lived in Willow Glen. I guess I was grateful, but I recall just being so embarrassed after driving so many German Volkswagens to be driving an American Dodge Duster. I mean who does that, right?

Next, I fell in love with a beat up old Karmann Ghia I got from my sister, Rockee. I really loved that car. Again, I had time to fix it up, so I tweaked it, made it look beautiful and had it painted a striking maroon color – it was gorgeous! And I wish I still had it to this very day, it was so cool looking.



But my girlfriend at the time crashed it, smashing a hole in the front end and that was it for me - I got rid of her and the car. Actually, was able to sell that Karmann Ghia and got myself enough money to fly to Maui - that turned out to be an amazing

Being Yourself

trip that I will expand upon in the next chapter.

It was on my return from Hawaii that I didn't have a car for weeks and months. It was very odd, I had to ride buses and the train. I think I eventually got this beat up old Rambler. It was green, and a truly ugly green. We all called it Exorcist green. You know that scene in the movie where she is hurling this green stuff from her mouth - that was the color of my car. By then I was living in Los Gatos on my own and I had that old beat up Rambler. It worked pretty well for me though, I'd drive it to rock concerts to see different bands play like Neil Young and Jackson Brown back in the day when outdoor concerts were just blossoming into the incredible events of today.



It was on one such venture to a concert that I was driving the Exorcist Green Rambler when it died on the beautiful bucolic Hwy 280 out in the middle of freaking nowhere. I was so bummed; I would be late for the concert and late picking up someone who I was to take to the concert. I was so frustrated with cars in general and so pissed off at this one, that I just left it there on the side of the road. Stuck my thumb out to catch a ride. To this day sometimes when I'm driving on 280, I look to my left

Being Yourself

and right and wonder whatever happened to that old Rambler.

Once again without a car and having no wheels to get around. My sister Mary, thank God, helped me get a car loan. It was my first brand-new car I'd ever owned and that managed to get me through the next few years and entered me into the world of cars that I didn't have to work on, and didn't break down at the drop of hat.

I used that car for a while, and then I started getting better jobs up in San Francisco. But I could not afford gas to go there every day and pay for parking. So, I used to take the train from San Jose to San Francisco. It kinda reminded me of my days traveling in Europe by train. But while working in San Francisco for Arts & Leisure Publications I worked my way up the ladder and became number four in the company, Associate Publisher. And they gave me a car, so that was cool.

For the next four or five years I would get company cars. I worked for three media companies in the early 80s and each one gave me a car. So, I was lucky, I never had to make car payments or pay insurance for several years. I want to say for five years in total, plus I had this amazing number of cars they put me in like a Ford Mustang, a Maserati, a Peugeot, a Mercedes. And we had access to these cars because we were a high profile media company, and we could trade them out for advertising space in

Being Yourself

our publications. By then we owned San Francisco Magazine, Executive Magazine, the USFL's Kickoff Magazine, and a dozen others. We often were driven around in limousines to different events too. So that was like a whole other way to travel, I could probably do a whole story on those limousine rides too. To different events, the Grammys, the Democratic National Convention in 1984, openings of big shows like Liza Minnelli and Kris Kristofferson. We had all these vehicles so that really gave me a break from not having to worry about cars breaking down and gave me a chance to drive a bunch of different cars.



Since I didn't have to make car payments, on a whim I bought a used MG Midget. I bought it from a mechanic. My friend, Harry Licursi, had one too. We would tool around together. We took a trip once to a Grateful Dead concert down in Monterey. We used to go wine tasting in them too. And even when I met Sue, we would go out winetasting in the little MG Midget. It was a fun weekend car, I kept it for a while even dragged it up to Petaluma when we moved up there Jenna was just a couple years old. Not exactly a family car and of course you could barely get two people in it, let alone 3. Plus, Jeff was soon to be on his way, so this little midget had to have a quick exit strategy which led to a

Being Yourself

whole other season of vehicles.

In my last media job in the city, Group Four Marketing, an advertising agency, somebody I worked with won a brand-new Vanagon on a radio show. But she did not drive, she only used public transportation and she didn't even have a driver's license. I managed to buy the car from her for pennies on the dollar. It was a steal, a brand spanking new VW Vanagon.



I had just gotten married to Sue and we ended up filling that van up with three kids over the next few years. Who would've ever thought?

You could probably imagine that driving around with three kids of varying ages, who were starting to talk back at you, was not a driving experience of great value. It was clear to me that we were now outnumbered, and I would soon need my own vehicle if I were to mentally survive this period of my life. I longed for my MG Midget. My maroon Karmann Ghia. Anything I could drive by myself.

And of course, that wasn't going to happen any time soon. There would be graduations, college payments and more graduations.

Being Yourself

Many things ahead of any thing resembling a Brother Bug.

So, as it was, being married, having a job, a house, and 3 kids, that I broke down and bought a practical car. This led to several years of Honda CRV's. I have to say I grew to like them; they were wonderful cars.



Very practical and they reminded me of my old Volkswagen square back in that I could load 'em up the back with stuff. And I did for work on construction projects and also camping trips with the family. The CRV was really fun. I kinda miss those cars now, I think they were cool.

So, from there on finally having some money I managed to buy a BMW convertible. Talk about a dream car - that was a really fun car. But two things kept happening to me. I got like three

Being Yourself

speeding tickets which were quite expensive. And then, being low to the ground, my windshields kept getting hit by rocks. I broke four windshields in six months. So that was expensive to deal with. To that beautiful piece of machinery, I had to say goodbye, “as lovely as you were, I could not afford to keep you”.



It was on a trip, I think one of our first trips to Europe when Julia was 14 and Jenna was at school in Seville, that I rented an Audi. I had never driven one and I fell in love with it. When I got home, I was able to lease one for four years. Man, I really loved that car, it was so cool. But I was soon drawn back to BMWs and that is what I drive now. The smaller SUV BMW x3. Safe, reliable, and

Being Yourself

can still put bunches of stuff into it when needed like a CRV, like my old VW square back.

And that is how I have been getting around all these years. Some people say a car tells a lot about a person. In my case I guess I could tell a lot about my life from the various vehicles I drove. They remind me of what was going on at that time, just like when you hear certain songs that remind you of different periods of your life. Vehicles are necessary and can be convenient when they are not frustrating to deal with.

I've left a few on the side of the road and I'm glad that I did. And some for me were literally bridges to new frontiers.

Being Yourself

One of your Favorite places?



Oddly, I woke up in Paradise. Maui to be exact.

It wasn't intentional at all, it just kinda happened. Unfolding at each stage. It was shortly after my mother had passed away in 1976. I decided to go to the islands. I went to my favorite travel agent in Willow Glen - Jack Peak Travel, down from the Garden theater. They had set me up going to Europe in '72 and now four years later I figured that they probably knew how to get me over there. And sure enough, the person I talked to sent me directly to Hana, Maui. What were the chances of that? I flew to Honolulu on a big bird by myself. And then they had me get on this little puddle jumper, a six seater Cessna airplane.

Being Yourself



The fleet was called the Royal Hawaiian Air Service. And it flew me directly from Honolulu to Hana, Maui. Paradise at the time and even now, relatively the same...



This was in 1976. Lahaina itself had not yet become a suburb of Los Angeles. This is before the mega hotels went in. I of course knew none of this, as I was half wanting to see an old girlfriend who had moved there. And mostly I had time on my hands and a little bit of money from a Karmann Ghia I had sold. I never knew how beautiful a place this could be, as I jumped out of that little six seater and hitchhiked up to the little cabins I was booked to stay at - thanks to Jack Peak.

Being Yourself



To locals, the shape of Maui is the shape of the bust of a woman and where the third eye would be is where Hana is located. Home to the Seven Sacred pools. Home to such wonderful artists as George Harrison and Kris Kristopherson. And even Sacred mushrooms, sporn by the roaming cattle which historically were managed by Portuguese cattle rustlers, brought over on ships a couple hundred years prior. So, I felt right at home and immediately begin my explorations.



And after a few days of settling into the timeless mood of that part of the island, I grew a little restless, stuck out my thumb, and headed to Lahaina. Along the way I discovered waterfalls, little villages, incredibly beautiful bridges, and a wonderful Arboretum.

Being Yourself



I would visit all these places many times in the future, but it was on this trip that I first discovered them. I'd never seen anything like it, not in Europe, not in my life thus far, and I of course, fell in love with the whole place.

When I reached Lahaina and met friends that I knew there, (including my old girlfriend who had gained like 30 pounds) and was now dating the manager of a new restaurant where she worked at called Longhi's. Yes, Longhi's and it had just opened. I decided to head up the road further toward what would become Kapalua (which had not yet been developed). The area was called Kahana and it was there I found a room in a house for \$50 a month. I made myself right at home, my bedroom window looking into a huge sugarcane ranch of which I often saw incredibly large pink spiders with black polka dots. As you know by now, I was not a fan of spiders. But I did love the location with the ranch on one side and on the other, the ocean where the locals had lobster traps - and all of our neighbors and people in the household were very friendly.

Being Yourself

I had no car, I had no job, but I finally got one at a hotel not far from where I lived - busing tables. I could walk there, it was in Kahana, before you get to Napili Bay and Honokowai, and I really enjoyed my time there. It was funny because the people I lived with in the house belonged to a group called Arica (<https://arica.org/>) and they were all from Florida. At the time I did not know what Arica was but apparently it was some kind of New Age awakening type group. Their slogan was, "I woke up in Paradise". Worked for me, I even cruised around with one their T-shirts for years afterward. I didn't indulge in their gig, but we all worked at restaurants. A couple people had cars and occasionally we would drive into Kaanapali at night and sneak into the giant hot tub at Papakea to hang out and listen to the waves crash against the wall there.



It's amazing to me that later in life our friends, Cindy and Larry would buy a condo there. We visited it multiple times, with the whole family.

Being Yourself



The girls; Kelsey, Jenna and Julia would all sleep in one room. Jeff, the only boy, moved into a closet and made it his home. We would visit time and again. I'd end up sitting in that same hot tub spa I sat in in 1976, well into the 2000's. Who would've ever thought that such a thing would be possible?

Lahaina and Longhi's were a magical place in the late 70's. It was where we all hung out after work and until early in the mornings. I remember Fleetwood Mac hanging out at Longhi's after their gig at the tennis courts in Kaanapali, there were probably just 3,000 people who had come to see them.



Longhi's had become the band's favorite hangout too and they came by after the gig to chill. I knew everybody there even Bob

Being Yourself

Longhi and his wife. We regulars at the restaurant had a thing when playing backgammon there, the loser would have to pay for the bottle wine we drank in the course of the game. It was our crazy ritual. Everybody was so friendly and kind, we were all refugees from the mainland, and this was our hideout.

Later in that time period. I ran into legendary rock promoter, Bill Graham, he was at the Blue Max with a girlfriend. (The Blue Max, a small venue, hosted musicians like Elton John, Linda Ronstadt, Fleetwood Mac, Crosby, Stills + Nash, Eagles, and the Rolling Stones.) I was able to sit down and talk with him and he said he knew my Dad which, blew my mind. He said he had known of him and Paul Catalina from when the Beatles played San Francisco.



Bill Graham and my dear friend Robert Altman.

He was truly kind to me. I was incredibly sad later in life when he died in a helicopter crash. I've been fortunate to meet him

Being Yourself

several other times. Once literally at his house in Marin when I was working for Arts & Leisure publications. We did a benefit there for the Mill Valley Film Festival in the early 80's. He flew in by helicopter and stopped in to see how it was going and literally stood right next to me, arms crossed, leaning against a wall, asking me how it was going. He had just popped in from a Day-On-the-Green concert in Oakland. He wanted to come and see how the party was going at his house. Also, there was Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, they were just hanging out chatting about something and weren't talking to anyone else. Robin Williams and Bobby McFerrin performed for a small group of wealthy Marin-ites. Thus, my rare connection with Bill Graham. I got to know him first in Lahaina, at the Blue Max, back in the day.

In the 70s I also got a chance to go to a volcanic crater atop Haleakala. I didn't realize how powerful the mountain was spiritually to the Hawaiians but also I recalled Jim Hurtak (from the Academy of Future Sciences in Los Gatos) referred to it as a vortex point. So, I wrote to him and told him I was staying in Maui near Lahaina and he and his wife Desiree flew out. Interestingly at the time, Jim knew the University people who ran the Optical Observatory at the top Haleakala. We were invited to go up there late one night and watch them shoot lasers to the moon.

Being Yourself



They were measuring the continental drift factor of the Hawaiian Islands from the US mainland. I was so fortunate to even witness this – a beautiful laser shot to the moon. Maui Space Surveillance System (MSSS). I got to know Jim and Desiree much better during that visit too. Desiree’s birthday is the same as mine, December 18, plus we’re about the same age. Jim and she stayed in Napili Bay and one night while we were walking along the shoreline with the sky full of stars and Jim started singing an opera. Some song he knew well. We were laughing, but his voice was amazingly beautiful, and I will never forget that time, it was magical.



Not only did I visit and come to love Maui, but I also explored other islands like Oahu, Molokai, Kona, and even the small island of Lanai that Larry Ellison (Oracle) had his place on. Sue

Being Yourself

and I visited there for one of our anniversaries and stayed at his beautiful Four Seasons hotel. We didn't see Larry, but we got to know the island well.

In retrospect I have probably been to Maui and the islands 30 or 40 times I lost count some time ago. I do remember several eventful trips - went for New Year's Eve '79 on a whim with three other friends and stayed at the Royal Lahaina in Honolulu, it was so much fun.



And there were many other times I would go for extended times. I also love to fish, going out on those small boats from the Lahaina harbor out along the coast and high cliffs of Lanai. It amazed me to see the fish jumping and to snag a Mahi-Mahi. They'd come charging at your hook, on the attack get smacked in the head by the wooden bait and bite the hook in anger. An incredible sight when they hit the deck they are such amazing colors. One time we were out and caught a Blue Marlin - that guy was huge, probably 7 feet. What a moment, felt like Ernest Hemingway down in Key West.

Being Yourself



There's something about the waters on Maui that are restorative and even as crazy a place as it has become, it's still wonderful to walk through along the coastline and go into the waters. Maybe stop and have breakfast at some little funky café and try and speak pidgin English with the local artisans and natives.



Fortunately, there were so many times we have visited when our kids were little, it was fun to watch them enjoy Maui as much as

Being Yourself

me, if not more. And especially rewarding as they got older and we could all sit around, laugh and enjoy an island drink while watching an awesome sunset. And of course, there were sunset sails, snorkeling, looking for geckos, eating fresh fish, and lots of great memories. I was glad to have stepped out of that little six seater in Hana – waking up in paradise to such a beautiful and magical part of the world.



What would you consider Your motto?



My motto is Be Prepared.



I know it's not original, but I was a Boy Scout. And to this day whenever I'm going somewhere, working on something, or thinking about doing something, I always have to be prepared.



Okay, I know it's anal. But if I'm traveling somewhere I have to print out all my tickets, my hotel reservations, everything! I

Being Yourself

know we live in a high tech age and I should not waste paper. But I DON'T care. What if the electricity goes out? I wanna have these hard copies as a backup. I take them with me in a folder whenever I travel.

Oh, and that's not all. I have to have a map. A PAPER map to see where the heck I'm going. Sometimes I even program my Garmin for every place I have to get to. Especially if it's in a foreign country. This works out 95% of the time. I do recall one 5% time when we ended up in a cow pasture overlooking the castle ruins we were actually trying to get to. Oh well, you can't win all the time.

Somewhat robotic but in most cases things work out well. So, if you going to do something. If you're going somewhere. If you've got to write a book, make a movie, train a dog - you have to be prepared. Right?

BTW, my other favorite motto is Go With the Flow.

Unfortunately, these two are not synonymous. So in order to "go with the flow", it is advisable not to be prepared for that experience. :)



What were your favorite subjects in high school?

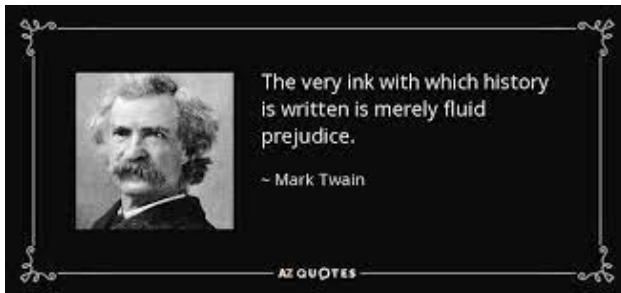


In high school my favorite subject other than History, English, and Drama, was Geometry. Now I hate math, it's no fun for me at all. But when I was in Geometry my teacher was so terrible a teacher, people used to fall asleep in the class while he babbled on about postulates and theorems. But I was busy writing song lyrics and poetry. I thrived in that class. Every day I knew I'd have an hour to collect my thoughts and put them down on paper and that's what I did. So oddly it became one of my favorite classes.

Now other than that, for some reason I liked history and I probably still do to this day. "Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it." Right? Plus, history to me teaches us the culture of the period and the way people reacted to one another. How things vary, like art, agriculture, weapons of war, music, architecture. So, I like that.

Being Yourself

I also liked English. It took me a long time to learn how to write. It's one of those things where if you don't do it over and over again, you're not going to get better at. I guess that's like anything; playing guitar, being good at a sport. Writing is no different. I worked with someone once who was a really good writer and she really pushed me to improve my writing. Mind you this is way later in my life. So, I did and hopefully I got better. But even now it's an ongoing effort that all started years ago in high school.



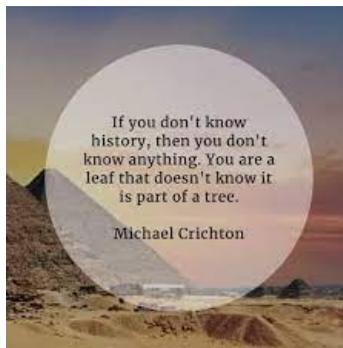
One time in an English class the teacher asked me to help him create an incident in the classroom so that my classmates and I could write about it. He was trying to teach us that history is just a collection of people's different viewpoints. So, we did a stunt to demonstrate this and get the kids writing. I came into class and got into an argument with him. I appeared to be so upset that I took a pair of scissors and cut his tie in half and then stormed out of the room. After a good laugh, the teacher told everyone to write about what they just saw and then we had to read it aloud

Being Yourself

to everybody.

This single lesson taught me more about history than anything else. It was so interesting to see how people viewed what occurred – each so differently; what they thought the disagreement was about; what thought we had said – and what actually did occur. It was very instructive. And I view journalism, reporting, and the writing of history through this same lens to this very day.

So, I guess each of us could write a book about our years in high school. Not that I will ...but for the most part, I liked English and History.



Being Yourself

What was your first Big Trip?



My first big trip was just after I graduated from high school, and I went to Europe in 1972. I went with two of my friends. One I knew since I was in the Cub Scouts. But after traveling with them for a couple weeks I realized how different we were from each other. And I decided to take off on my own. So, I did.

I also got rid of my clothes, cut my hair (I had shoulder length hair). In Europe that was just not a good look at the time. I looked like a hippie from California. So, I cut my hair, got rid of my clothes and bought some clothes at a rummage sale ...and I looked more European. I grew a beard while traveling. I bought a guitar at a flea market and began writing songs about my travels. I wrote over a dozen songs while on this trip. I kinda looked like Cat Stevens. Because when I would meet new people they would go, “Oh, Cat Stevens, Cat Stevens”, embellished with their European accents.

Being Yourself



And the fact that I was from the San Francisco Bay Area was kind of a big deal because of the bands from that area were famous worldwide (at the time) like Van Morrison, the Grateful Dead, and the Jefferson Airplane. On this trip I also fell in love with history and going to art galleries.

I traveled by train most of the time, if I couldn't find a place to sleep at a hostel, I would just jump on a train at night, sleep, and when the train got somewhere in the morning, I would just get up and see that city before going onto the next.

I went to 14 countries. I visited Munich just months after the first terrorist attack on Israeli athletes. I wasn't very aware until I got there and understood the severity of the situation. It woke me up to gain a broader sense of politics in the world. I also had fun, went to an Oktoberfest, drank a large liter full of Lowenbrau beer. Even toured the facility.

Being Yourself

I had many memorable experiences on that trip. In Switzerland I got to see my cousin Jack and his wife Diane, and their kids. The girls were all little at the time and living in Basel. I picked apples up in the Swiss Alps saved some money, but I got sick and went back to Basel. I spent about three or four days in bed at my cousin's house. It's interesting because to this very day we all have this connection to that period, even their daughters Jackie and Christina, from when I visited them briefly in Europe in 1972.



At a train station in Basel, I reconnected with a friend and went to Greece. I had an amazing time. Left on a boat outside Piraeus to a little island called Sifnos. I remember there being goats and chickens on the boat. People were very friendly, they liked Americans back then. And I stayed there for a week and wrote a song that we later recorded with the Mystic Seamen, "Island". With my friend from high school and a new friend from Denmark, we got totally plastered drinking Retsina (the local wine) and Ouzo.

Being Yourself

We lived above a restaurant near where boats would come in to the harbor once a day, typically in the late afternoons. We'd go out there drunk as could be, greeting people as they came off the boat. I'm sure they thought we were crazy. One night I even called my mom from a payphone. It was Halloween night.

I do remember coming home. At the San Francisco airport my brother Al and our friend, John Maxwell, picked me up. I think we all cried; I looked so different from when I had left. Like I had grown up or something. It had been several months since I'd seen them.

It felt great to be back in the U.S. But it would be decades later before I was able to return to Europe. I regret that now but remarkably, it was when Jenna went to Spain to study abroad in her junior year of college. If she hadn't gone, I don't know if I would have ever made it back. I am so glad she did, and we all did eventually. Multiple times since. One of the most phenomenal things in my life was to see all three of my kids, study abroad and fall in love with Europe and traveling as I had.

I loved traveling at that time in my life. And I have loved traveling ever since...

What did your children teach you over the years of raising them?

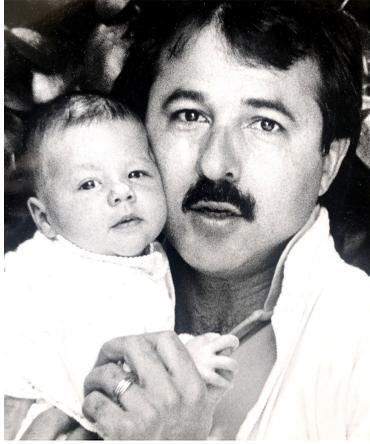


What's interesting is that it starts right away as soon as they are born. And it lasts indefinitely. Up to that point ...it's likely you've been living a little recklessly, right. In your late 20s or early 30s having a good time, not having to be responsible for much except maybe a dog or cat.

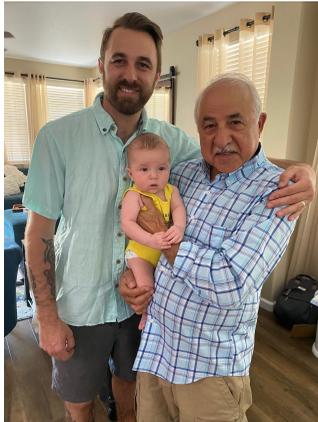


And then it hits you. Suddenly, there's this little being you are now responsible for. Protecting it, keeping it safe, and the slightest mishap gives you a huge jolt.

Being Yourself



It's overwhelming at first but then you get used to it. I can cite different incidents that freaked me out. One time driving, Julia was in the backseat eating some candy and she started choking. I had to pull over, smack her on the back, hoping it would pop out. Everything happens in a second and then you have to do something immediately - you can't stop to think. It doesn't matter if Jeffrey's falling out of the crib while screaming to get out. You may simply get there too late to catch him. Oops!



Being Yourself

Or that you find yourself driving all the kids to school because you're so worried about child kidnappers. And I do remember reaching a point after a few years, in one day just simply deciding - that was it -we were not going to have daytime babysitters any more. That was a big change in our lives but we successfully made it through that period. We just did not want other people raising our kids any longer.



The funny thing for me is that for most of my life I was not very good at managing money. Your mom will tell you it wasn't till we got married that I stop borrowing money from her.



Being Yourself

Hah, hard to believe now. But was true then. So I just got into a crazy mode thinking about the future and having money to put the kids through college and everything else. Our desires to travel as a family. And everything just costing sooo much money. My friend, Kelly McManus, used to refer to it as “feeding the monster”. That we had created a monster when we created our families because the burn rate was so high – every single month. It was true, the cost at the time felt staggering. But it did teach me how to save and invest money, and to diversify my portfolio. That is not something I ever sought out to do until I had a family.



Out of that, it occurred to me that I could teach my kids how to save money. I did that because my father never really taught me anything about it. True he had six kids (can't image how hard that would be) and he barely got any of them through college. I

Being Yourself

didn't want to go through that. Plus, I wanted to teach my children how to at least save money and maybe invest money, and to encourage them not to loan money to other people. I wanted to impart to them the hard lessons I had learned the hard way. Hopefully to help avoid such troubles for themselves.



I'm happy to say now that I think it worked out well. It isn't any one little thing. I did it in small moments and installments. I tried to make it fun and sometimes even goofy. Like searching the house Christmas morning through gifted clues, discovering \$100 dollar bills. Cool, but I would ask, "well what are you going to do with it?" If they came to me with a question I tried to answer it a way that might make sense to them. But collectively it's funny how they remember certain things and now they want and do things that I had advocated in those early years. That is very rewarding to see and I'm very proud of each and every one

Being Yourself

of them.



In a whole other realm, what I've learned from my children (and my wife) is just humility. And being able to roll with what happens. When kids are little things are just plain chaotic. It feels like chaos, not just for a day, or a moment, but for years. I barely remember being able to sleep through the night for a really, really long time. There was always something that came up, that woke me up. It's funny now because I just wake up early. I like to read. I like to write early in the morning, it's my time alone and to be creative.

That came out of having kids, and even now I wake up early and get to take care of Weston. I totally enjoy it. One thing I see is just how creative he is and it rubs off on you. He just goes moment by moment, completely enthralled with life. Just amazed at every moment, everything no matter how insignificant, is like WOW. There's a lot to learn from that perspective. At my age it's like a

Being Yourself

magical tonic. So without going on for 12 chapters more on what I learned from my children, I will leave it there with what I've learned from Weston.



You certainly have to laugh at yourself, at your clumsiness, at your struggles to move forward. Nothing is perfect, you might bump your head every now and then, but eventually you do learn to crawl, to walk, to stand, and to be a good human being. And with any luck, in a happy and prosperous family.

Being Yourself

Did anyone in the family play a part in history with a capital H?



My father. Interestingly he worked at the San Jose Chamber of Commerce. They used to brag that it was the fastest growing city in the U.S. At the time that was a big deal. It was after the second World War, mid-50's to early 60's, so growth was an enormous challenge across the nation.

Being Yourself



And of course, it eventually became Silicon Valley.



But at the time they had no idea. They didn't know a chip from a prune pit. I say that because Santa Clara Valley at the time was full of prune, cherry, and apricot orchards. It even had a reputation as the Prune Capital the World for a while. But my father, and his cronies at the time, managed to pave over much of those orchards with an explosion of housing in the suburbs with shopping malls and attracting businesses like IBM, Intel, and Fairchild. Just down the street from where I grew up is now eBay, further down is Apple and dozens of other high-tech companies.

Being Yourself

And my father, the PR man that he was, had a small hand in the very, very early years. The beginning of the boom, a seedling of an idea to grow a great All American City. From there, the rest is history.



I remember as kids, my brother Gary and I would go with Dad to a radio station where he had a show he did on Saturday mornings called Chamber Chatter.



Of course, I never really listened to what the heck he was chatting about. But if I had, I probably would have bought Apple stock when it first came out. But as a kid I had picked prunes, it was a nasty job. So when I heard something about an Apple, I thought it was just another fruit picking gig and I didn't wanna have nothin' to do with it. Oh well, pretty much missed that boat.

Being Yourself

What are your biggest influences in life?



Well without a doubt there are three things that have played a big role and influence in my life. One is travel, the other's music, and third is my family.



I started traveling when I was incredibly young. I'm sure I was a problem child for my family. It would be little things like Boy

Being Yourself

Scout overnight trips and eventually camping trips with my friends. Even in high school, hitchhiking up to Oregon. My mother would've been terrified. But there was something about the open road that opened my spirit and allowed me to flourish, meeting people, experiencing other cultures, and places.

I remember once in high school going up to Lake Almanor with my friend Steve Beamer and his family and we would feel the warm sun in the morning coming up over the redwoods. It felt magical.

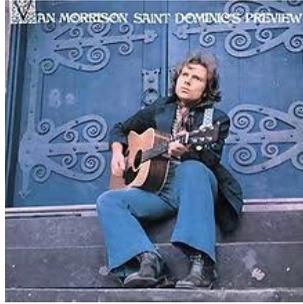


Even years later when I was traveling in Europe one of the most inspiring times was when I boarded a train to Denmark. It left at night around 9 o'clock, we happened to be crossing a body of water. When I woke up, the train was on a boat and it was dawn, the sun was coming up over a whole area I'd never been to before. It was just an awesome feeling.

It was times like these that music also played an influence. I remember while traveling in Europe in 1972 we would go to

Being Yourself

record shops. And at the time you could play any record and listen to it on headphones. I listened to Van Morrison's latest album St. Dominic's preview.



It was here that I first heard Listen to the Lion. It was a meltdown for me. It paid homage to my entire trip and to that sunrise I saw coming into Copenhagen. Music was magical to me ever since I was incredibly young, listening to my brother Al play folk songs that he had written, sitting on the bed in his bedroom, all of us couched around - mesmerized by his enchanting voice. Music was storytelling and everyone we listened to changed us from Bob Dylan to Donovan, the Jefferson Airplane, onto the Beatles, the Stones, and dozens of others. Their influence was stark and probably the most profound on me were early songwriters like Joni Mitchell, Jackson Brown, and Tim Buckley, who was one of my favorites. I was so lucky to have seen him live - what an extraordinary artist! I got to meet a lot of different artists when I was younger through working in music, or when I worked for Arts & Leisure Publications. I got to meet the likes of

Being Yourself

Nicky Hopkins, Liza Minnelli, Huey Lewis, and Robin Williams.

It was also very influential to be born into a family of eight people. It's like an organization, right? There were even half women, half men, all shapes and sizes. I recall Saturday evenings my father would make us all sit and speak around the kitchen table. We had to talk about what was going on in our lives - you only had a few minutes and if you didn't speak up you could not leave the table. Later it was like eat your peas but in this case it was tell your story. He'd go around the table it was always fascinating. But it taught us how to speak in front of other people. I give my father a lot of credit for doing little things like that. I know how hard it is for some people to talk in public. But I guess I got used to it. I'm not too shy to speak my mind. It also taught me how to listen. That is a special skill. It is actually much harder to listen and then speak, vs just blurting something out. And in listening, you get the feel of where people are coming from. Be in their shoes for a moment.



Being Yourself



You get a tremendous sense and depth of who they are. If you listen carefully you can hear pain, love, joy... authenticity never lies. If you listen carefully you can hear it all.

It's funny how now we're all on zoom and you hear people speaking all the time. It makes me thankful to my early upbringing. The other thing about family is that thing called "esprit de corps". "The spirit of the group" it's interesting that we learn this almost tribal feeling when we are with groups. You learn to laugh, to cry, to respect.

Being Yourself



But the spirit of the group is an important element and oddly if you look at our Thanksgiving dinners, they are an emulation of everything I ever learned from my family growing up. We look for the “spirit of the group”, we allow each person to speak, to cry, to be heard. And we listen. Sometimes it is incredibly moving. Other times, absolutely hysterical with relentless

Being Yourself

laughter.



So, it is astounding the influence of the things that have affected me the most. To this day I love traveling. I love the adventure. I love the discovery. I love the freshness. I often write when I'm on airplanes. No telephones, no influence of any kind. And I have probably written some of my best things while 30,000 miles high in the sky, letting my thoughts roll out of my brain. And then, each day, wherever I end up is a revelation.



Being Yourself

And sometimes there's a soundtrack that goes with it. The music that I hear in the airport, on my headphones, or just on the street, from a café, is the soundtrack of my life. What I am hearing is of no coincidence. Not at all. If I hear music of any kind wherever I am. I feel I was meant to hear that melody in that moment. So, there's a combo right there of influences, of music merging on a collision course with my desire to travel. And now I love to travel with my family on excursions where we all go together and have an experience.



Being Yourself



I suppose that all started in our trips camping. Like the silly emergence of the Mystic Seamen was from a camping trip that we all had. Which led to a musical album. Which led to a party, which led to this, which led to that. And even now we travel as a family and share the experience. We have had many when our kids were little and we would travel to Hawaii, and then later to

Being Yourself

Tahoe, and Sugar Pine. And most recently for Jenna and Ryan's wedding.



And now I long to travel again back to Europe. I loved traveling with Jenna and Shaun across Spain. And what an adventure with mom and Julia in Spain in 2011.

Being Yourself



I love a long journey that goes on for weeks and weeks. And as I move toward retiring, I look forward to traveling to far distance places for long periods of time. And to the music that will come with it and the encounters we'll have along the way with our expanded family. A blessed combination of travel, music, and family.

Being Yourself

What famous people have you met and how did you meet them?



I don't know why but throughout my life I have met "famous" people. It started from being in the family of my father, who worked at the Santa Clara County Fair in the early sixty's. He was in charge of public relations at the time and had to take care of entertainers who came to the fair to perform. The fair touring circuit was big at the time for entertainers like, Elvis Presley, the Everly Brothers, Hank Williams, and even the Beach Boys. These bands would be on the road going from county fair to county fair. When they hit my Dad's fair, he had the brilliant idea to bring them home for a barbecue. Providing them with a home-cooked meal on the road. We never knew who would be coming over during the two or three weeks that the fair was on. I'm sure my mother was terrified with six kids. Dad was relentless and brought home entertainers like Wayne Newton, Jimmy Rogers,

Being Yourself

and Dick & Dee Dee.

One time we met Maury Amsterdam who was part of the Dick Van Dyke show. We visited his house in LA on a trip to Disneyland -all of us. We swam in his swimming pool which was like no other swimming pool we had been in before. I also remember being there because his son was really weird; wore all-black clothes including a turtleneck, and threw daggers as a hobby. I'm serious. Will never forget how weird and strange that was.



Later on, I met people through my job working on magazines at Arts & Leisure's. I was introduced to them at events that we were

Being Yourself

producing or sponsoring or stories we were working on. They included well-known people like Kris Kristofferson, Liza Minnelli, Bill Graham, Tony Bennett, Joe Montana, Steve Young, Herschel Walker, Barbara Eden (I dream of Jennie), Robin Williams, George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Bobby McFerrin, and the famous columnist from the San Francisco Chronicle, Herb Caen. One day I ran into Neil Young walking down the street near the Paramount theater in Oakland. He seemed twice as tall as me. Yes I did say hi, but that was about it – I was too chicken.



Over 550 of San Francisco's top civic, corporate and editorial leaders attended a glittering testimonial for Cyril Magnin at the Westin St. Francis Hotel October 26, 1983, an event held as a benefit for Shakespeare-San Francisco and the Free Shakespeare in the Park program. Shown above (L to R) are Bobby Winston, Administrative Director of Shakespeare-San Francisco, the Honorable Mayor of San Francisco, Dianne Feinstein and Co-Publisher of San Francisco Magazine Mark Millan.

Robert Altman, Photographer

I also met a lot of politicians at various times through Arts & Leisure's, my work in recycled water, and as a public official myself. I got to meet Senator Dianne Feinstein (when she was Mayor and a Senator), Nancy Pelosi (before and while she was the Speaker of the House), Gavin Newsom when he was a mayor

Being Yourself

of San Francisco, Congressman Mike Thompson, Congressman Jared Huffman, Willie Brown, Cyril Magnum, Cecil Williams, Senator Chris Dodd. While mom and I were dating, I had to interview Senator Dodd at the Oakland airport and mom took pictures of him. The article and the pictures were in San Francisco Magazine.

I will say that meeting famous people can be exciting and certainly gets your adrenaline running. But actually, not all that meaningful if you don't get a chance to talk with them. A couple times I got to speak at length with Joe Montana because I ran into him a few times. Once on a flight from LA we sat next to each other. This was months after Robert Altman, and I had photographed him for the cover of San Francisco Magazine. So that was nice. But for the most part I prefer non-famous people. They can be just as complex and even more interesting, once you get to know them.



Lisa Minelli and Joel Grey Party, San Francisco, June 14, 1961
Sponsor: Monsieur Henri Mises, Ltd.

What about being a child do you miss the most?



My favorite thing about being a child was not having to be responsible for anything. Even though I was a very responsible child (Hah, oh really?). I liked it when I didn't have to worry about anything.



One of my favorite places to go as a child was to a camp for a week. There was something about being away from your usual weekly rat race to spending time in an alternate reality. At camp you just show up and they have all these activities for you to do and you didn't have to pay for anything! You could just pick

Being Yourself

something to do and do it. And when you were hungry you just went wherever they had the food and sat down and ate! You didn't have to shop or cook or prepare anything at all. So, I like that!



I will say that now that I'm grown up. I still like to go to camp but these days I do it on a boat. I love river cruises like the ones Viking puts on. You don't have to do anything. They have all kinds of activities for you and spent time discussing history and politics in the areas you are visiting. You can choose what you want to do. You never have to prepare a meal. You just show up, pick what you want, and they bring it to you. You're not to pay for any thing cuz you already did to get on the boat in the first place! I particularly like that it's very carefree and for a week or so while you're traveling you don't have to worry about paying bills, calling someone back, or doing anything. You just get to relax and enjoy.

Being Yourself



So, I guess what I liked as a child I still like now. I'm lucky that I get to cruise. I'm looking forward to doing more cruising once the Covid clouds lift. And I'm looking forward to not having to do anything at all - and just enjoying seeing new places, and experiencing my own version of day camp for grownups. Why not!



Being Yourself

Aunts and Uncles of our lives



On Saturday, July 31, 2021 my dear Aunt Thelma enjoyed a nice brunch and then fell asleep for a nap from which she never awoke. She was 100 years old and 11 months. If any of us could be so lucky. She was my mom's older sister, and they were pals. Unfortunately, my mom who was the youngest of six in her family who died at 54. Amazingly her older sister lived to be the oldest of all the children of my grandma and grandpa - Katherine and John Freitas. So ended a small piece of our family history and an era of Freitas of which we (including our kids) are descendants.

They had come from Portugal, from the island of Faial in the Azores chain. I happen to learn a little bit about the history from talking to other relatives. Interestingly, John Freitas, who we do not know very much about, had a little trouble there and thought best to head to America where "opportunities abound".

Being Yourself

Fortunately, they made their way to Newark, California where he and my grandmother started a foundry that made iron pans, skillets and other items that people needed including parts for the building of the Golden Gate Bridge. Who would've thought? In addition to that, they also grew apricots. And in my younger days we used to help pick and dry them in these dryers that used of all things - sulfur. It was back then that I acquired my taste for dried apricots which I have to this very day. (And is the reason I put them in my Thanksgiving dressing.) Tradition is a pulling of our youthful sleeves, a beckoning to our past for reasons we are not always conscious of.

My Aunt Thelma was a wonderful person. It was sad that she had gone through such hard times, she lost her first husband. Her daughter, Debbie, lost her husband in a car crash from a drunk driver. But her youngest daughter, Melanie, was in a car crash and had barely survived coming in and out of consciousness. And never regained her full senses. It was sad because years later I would see Melanie being kept alive on a board, like a seesaw going back and forth. Just to keep her blood moving throughout her body. I could only see this for one time. I can't imagine how her sister Debbie, or her mom sustained and cared for Melanie all those many years under stressful conditions until she passed.

Being Yourself

It was especially sad for me and my siblings because she was like a sister to us. When she was younger she would stay at our house in Willow Glen. Fit right in and was very funny. We loved her; she was hilarious. It was hard, it was the first person I knew who was in a car accident. Somebody that I had loved and had known in my youth.

Now Aunt Thelma was lucky in a way as she happened to work for the post office and she even had one of the original P.O. boxes. In fact, her P.O. number was #1 and she still has it. She also was lucky to have been a U.S. postal worker, a government job that likely paid a pension for years and years.

While growing up my grandmother, who we called, Granny, had a small room in the back behind her house that was called the Rumpus Room. It was actually quite small but when we were little it felt huge. You've probably have heard Uncle Al talk about it now and then, and even Uncle Gary. Some times he calls our biweekly Zoom meetings, "Meet us at the Rumpus Room". The Rumpus Room is where we gathered for Thanksgiving, birthdays, and celebrations for my grandmother's family of four girls and two boys (my aunts & uncles) that we all knew growing up. Plus, we knew all the cousins, and we used to socialize with all of them. Years later we had Cousins Parties at my Aunt Lil's. Maybe some of you remember those visits.

Being Yourself

Even to this very day I still connect with my cousins. Through Facebook, calls, or by texts we all stay connected. Kinda like you guys, you know your cousins but as you get older, and their parents pass away it's a little devastating because you feel for them ...and for yourself. For that piece of your past now gone.

But especially now as Thelma was the very last one of all of those people we knew and who survived to be almost 101. Who would've ever thought that was possible? I suppose with current science and things, some of you may live to be well over hundred and maybe you'll remember this little story that I shared with you today.



Being Yourself

In the next few weeks, we will probably have a celebration for Aunt Thelma's life. For all of our lives actually. I can guarantee you that all my cousins will be there because, like us, they know it is the last elder of that sacred tribe. A people that we loved, that cared for us when we were young and we were influenced by. She survived so many hard things in life, hopefully we will not have to endure. And yet she was warm and funny. She knew my mother. She knew all of us kids. She knew how devastated we were when my mother died. She looked out for us. She looked out for Molly. She knew if my mother were alive, she would've loved knowing all of you, seeing you all, experiencing you all. Her and my Aunt Lil were like that. They knew how sad it was for my mom to have missed out on so much.

So, I tell you all this is not to be sad but to share a portion of our history, and the history of our family. Every family has a history and ours is uniquely rich. This is the Portuguese side that I'm speaking of and its orientation toward family is huge. It can never be underestimated. Sue and I have always strived to share the importance of family. We both know of all the things in life it is of the highest value. Bar none. You can have a lot of money. You could have a lot of friends. You could have a lot of whatever. Your family being there for you at times when you need them is the most significant thing. We hope that if anything, we teach our children, and their children, the value of this amazing

Being Yourself

ingredient of life.

I never would've believed or even thought that one of my aunts or uncles would live to be hundred. My gosh, they swore, they smoked, they drank. One last thing about Aunt Thelma we learned, is that she actually had saved enough money, even in her later years, to pay for her recent expenses at the facility that was caring for her in her final days. Right to the very day she passed.

My goodness, we are going to miss her so.

How do you make difficult decisions, like when to change jobs?

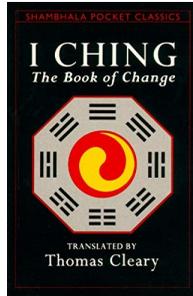


Well, this is fun because when I was younger I would write down the typical pros and cons of making a job change. I would pull at my hair and agonize over what to do. Then I would throw the I Ching, read the purported message, and then make my decision. Worked remarkably well at the time!

Now this is not quite like reading Tarot cards or astrology, or anything like that. But historically in the East, this is how people considered challenging decisions for hundreds of years. With the I Ching process you throw three coins and depending on how they come up, heads or tails, gives you a random pattern. You then look up the pattern in the I Ching book and it provides your with a philosophical response/advice. I suppose it sounds no different than flipping a coin. But it is more of a ritual, an

Being Yourself

elongated flipping of the coin, if you will. The bonus is that it comes with some ancient eastern wisdom to sprinkle on your decision making process. That you actually may, or may not, be happy to hear.



Nonetheless I have to say it did help me make it through a few tough decisions regarding job changes in my life. And of course, when we make decisions like that they can be quite dramatic and can affect your life for years and years. I'm sure it's always agonizing to have to make big decisions about job changes. It could be for a myriad of reasons right? You don't like someone, your not treated right, not paid enough, not challenged enough. You need to move on to something or somewhere else. There's always a reason right? And now you know and there's always the I Ching to lean on. :)

What is your best advice when it comes to raising children?



In looking back, I think my children may laugh at the little class sessions I would have with them about money. I did try to make it fun and funny. And often times I even paid them for showing up. But I wanted them to learn something about managing money. I had not learned much about money at all until much later in life. So, I'm very pleased with the way that they have each taken up their views of money. And I hope it helps them do the things they love throughout their lives.

Being Yourself

In my early teens I read this in the book, *The Prophet*. It is how I viewed myself and my parents. Probably much to their chagrin. As I was a little bit of a rebel ...at times. So, my best advice is the advice I learned early on from the writer, Kahlil Gibran.

This is what he had to say about children:

“Your children are not your children
They are the sons and daughters of life’s longing for itself
They come through you but not from you
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you

You may give them your love but not your thoughts
For they have their own thoughts
You may house their bodies but not their souls
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow

Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams
You may strive to be like them
But seek not to make them like you
For life goes not backward, nor tarries with yesterday

You are the bows from which your children
As living arrows are sent forth
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite
And he bends you with his might

That his arrows may go swift and far

Being Yourself

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness
For even as he loves the arrow that flies
So he loves also the bow that is stable”

Being Yourself

What was your best boss like?



I've had many bosses. But for sure my favorite boss probably changed my life the most. I was kind of a train wreck coming out of a bankruptcy in 1980 and was totally broke, didn't even have a car. I was 27. So I answered an ad to work as a production manager at Arts & Leisure Publications in San Francisco. This job was very transformational for me. More than any other.

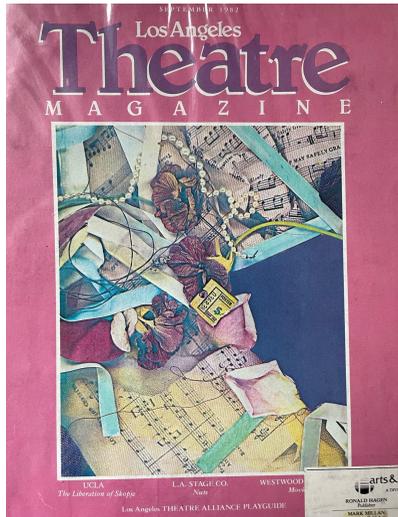
My boss was a guy name Ron Hagen. He was a Leo and a BIG dreamer. He was an excellent business person, salesperson, and quite a negotiator. At the time we were publishing playbills and magazines. The revenue came from advertising, print advertising (fyi...this was before fax machines and the internet). But he went well beyond that with merchandising products at events that we were connected to like the San Francisco Ballet. He would have us pouring Remi Martin cognac at the opening nights of an opera or ballet. Sometimes it was a champagne or

Being Yourself

wine. And the advertisers in our publications absolutely loved this merchandising thing. It was so successful that we did it in multiple cities; Chicago, New York, Los Angeles. And of course, San Francisco. The business grew to where we had over twelve different publications that we created each month connected with theaters and musical events. We work closely with Bill Graham Presents.

Ron taught me to think big and sometimes he thought so big that it scared the heck out of me. I recall when he promoted me to Associate Publisher I was honored. I went from a Production Manager to Associate Publisher. I was one of the youngest publishers in San Francisco at the time. I don't think I was 29 yet. We had purchased San Francisco Magazine, Executive Magazine(s) in 3 markets, and we just kept expanding. This challenged me and he taught me to expand my capabilities of managing people, speaking with people, making deals and commitments. And putting on huge events.

Being Yourself



I remember at that time, that if I had made a mistake. It would cost the company tens of thousands of dollars. Yikes, no pressure. If I missed the delivery of programs to an event it was beyond embarrassment, it was a contractual failure. I'm happy to say that I never ever missed a single delivery. I came close one time with the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. But I did get everything there one hour before the show began.

Working with Ron I got to travel a lot too. Every week I seemed to be in another city, or at a meeting, or some opening event. He was funny in that whenever we went somewhere, and he thought we were near a place that he'd never seen before; he would make time to go there. No matter what! Once we were in Florida and he wanted to go to the Epcot Center so I went with him. It was a great diversion from our work at the time. To this day when I

Being Yourself

travel I always think about what else could I see while I'm here. Why not try to see something new. Who knows when you're going to be there again, right? That is something I learned from my boss.

Overall, I got to uplift my life tremendously. Because we were in advertising, I had a new car all the time, I ate well (even gained weight that I still carry), and I had all new clothes. When Sue and I got married I was able to trade out most of the expenses of our entire wedding weekend and hardly spent any real money. Looking back now after our recent family weddings, that was pretty darn amazing.

There was this one time that Ron asked me to work on football publications for a new football league called the USFL. Just imagine, by then I was already producing about 18 different magazines a month with a team of 30 people. I told him, "No", I didn't want to do it. Here I've been working in the arts field in several cities for probably three years by now. Going into football seemed sacrilege. There was no way I was gonna work on football. I was never really into sports that much and I wasn't a football fan in particular. So, I quit.

I think he was a little surprised. He called me over the weekend and so did the other publisher. They begged me to come back, offered me more money, another car, a house in the City. So, of

Being Yourself

course I caved, and went back. It became a whole other chapter of my life I could not have even imagined.



I got to meet so many people in the football world. I got to be on the field for a bunch of games. Including a Super Bowl at Stanford when the 49ers played the Dolphins. I got to work with amazing photographers. I met so many football players at the time; Herschel Walker, Steve Young, I met a lot of the coaches and wealthy owners too. It was just a whole other world. Once I got to photograph Joe Montana with my friend Robert Altman, the photographer from Rolling Stone magazine. He and I did photo shoots with a lot of famous people at the time like Cindi Lauper, Tony Bennett, and Bill Graham. But it was really fun when we photographed Joe Montana. It was just the 3 of us in a studio in LA and we had a chance to really get to know each other.

Being Yourself



Ron and the other publishers Penny & Sue.

It's hard to describe why, but I did end up moving on from Arts & Leisure Publications. Ron had brought in a French guy to oversee me and others as we were hitting a tough financial batch. It was a wild time making payroll each month and paying our printers. We had astronomical bills. Many people quit during that time - including me. One day Ron came into my office so angry with me over a recent issue of SF magazine I had created under the direction of this crazy French man; Gerard Avenal. He was so angry he threw his coffee cup (with coffee in it) against the wall in my office. We parted friends but it was a tough break. We both kept it on a high note as best we could but it was really really hard to leave. It had been a stressful run, but such an incredible learning experience for me, all my years at Arts & Leisure.

Being Yourself

It was over 10 years later he called me to work on a project in LA. It was a dot com incubator company and they had dozens of web properties they owned. I made several trips every month to LA for almost a year. Our kids were little then and I felt bad being gone so much, that's when I bought a swimming pool and a hot tub for us all.

We created a really cool web portal for the agricultural community (WorldAG), one of the first of its kind. They were paying me really well per month. But the stock market crashed for hi tech stocks, and the incubator company folded within a week... while I was there. I lost over 50,000 shares in the company - they became worthless. It was sad because I thought, well we all thought, we would become multi-millionaires. But it was not to be. The best part of it all though was I got to work with Ron again and I have to say it was a good experience.

Years later when I became the Mayor of Windsor he was very proud of me. He wrote me and told me as much. I think he's somebody who saw me in a way that I could not see. That first time I came into his office looking for work, a young bankrupted entrepreneur, he saw something else. Maybe a little of himself. And since that time he saw how much I had grown during our years working together. Essentially, in front of his eyes. He had two daughters, but I think he sometimes viewed me as a son he

Being Yourself

never had. Clearly he had taken me under his wing and introduced me to the world of publishing and much much more. I did all I could to help him be successful and he did the same for me.

Overall he was a great boss and a great guy. We have a lot that we value and share in our histories.

How has your life turned out differently than you imagined it would?



That's a really hard question. When we start out we don't always know what we're going to do, let alone become. Right? Then things happen you meet people or circumstances force you into situations that cause you to be different. One of my things I sometimes fretted over was that I never finished college. But I have to say when I started going to college, I was so busy making and selling leather clothes, recording music, and later working in publishing, that I probably learned more on the job than I would have at school. At least that is how I rationalized it. But I'm very pleased that all my kids made it through college and I hope that it was life-changing for them. I hope that they got to meet people and experience things that I did not get to do. It is one of the things in my life (so far) that I wish I had done but didn't.

Being Yourself

I think that as the times changed, I changed. I mean think of all the different things I have done from working in leather and how far I went with that. And working in music and how far I went with that. And then my work experience in publishing was really pretty phenomenal and potentially could have done it for another 20 or 30 years. But instead, I was actively involved in advertising as a Creative Director, and I could've continued in that direction, in that field.

The combination of all of these experiences led me to these last 25 years of owning my own business and being able to do all of those things. In this line of work, I have had to be creative; publishing content all the time in multiple mediums; from writing copy, creating graphics, videos, and websites. So, I feel like I never really left or lost those earlier skills. I just piled onto them by applying them to a new direction and category of water communications.



When I first started Data Instincts. It was going to be a CRM company. (Customer Relationship Marketing). I was a huge fan. I even went to conferences all over the country. Learning about database marketing and data mining. The only reason I shifted is

Being Yourself

because of the market crash in April 2000. Many of the firms I wanted to be among, just disappeared. Like “Net Perceptions”, “Goldmine”, “Prevail”, and so many other great companies. I was at a loss.

I made a quick shift assisting Santa Rosa with its Geysers Recharge Project (Using recycled water to recharge geothermal wells, generating electricity for over 100,000 people in the Bay Area’s grid.) In the spring of 2000, just as construction was getting underway, a woman was killed by a construction worker swinging a metal plate into a roadway on a foggy Santa Rosa morning. Traveling by at a high speed, her car and her were cut in half. PR damage control was immediately needed. And I suddenly found myself sucked into recycled water communications in a way I never thought I would for the next several years. So I brought all I knew and had learned up to them to the party, essentially introducing CRM to the water space. It was a novel idea at the time to that industry, and the rest is history as they say.

Along the way so much happened, the kids grew up, went to college, married, we traveled all over the world. The world began to change, the expanded use of recycled water became even more important. Oddly, I feel like I made it okay through all of that. Given the circumstances.

Being Yourself

The whole idea of a career could be a stifling concept. I think in Europe people look at it differently like you are having a life and in your life you're going to do various things that may include a career. Or whatever you do towards making a living. But it's not the center of the universe, just one of the many attributes of being a person. I don't regret anything along my path, it's been a very interesting journey. And I think for every person it's similar. You start off in a direction, things happen, you alter course, adjust and adapt, and keep moving on.

And I'm still not done. I had tried to achieve a certain level in water communications and have been fortunate to participate at a national and international level. I did not originally imagine or expect that I would be able to do that. I did aspire and plan. But in doing so, I did not realize how impactful it would be or just how important providing new water supplies would actually be. A small gift to distinct parts of the country and the globe that lack sufficient water resources - an essential part of life for us all.

In the future as I contemplate retiring, I would like to find some activity that allows me to feel creative. I am not locked into any particular idea just something where I might be able to contribute and express myself in some medium that I can enjoy without the pressures and demands experienced in the day-to-day business conundrum.

Being Yourself

Most rewarding has been being connected with my family and my siblings families. I did not anticipate earlier how powerful that might be. But it is the best part of the whole enchilada. Without those relationships and the experiences of growing up together we would miss so much. And now watching new ones come along it's even more rewarding to be in this position and being able to enjoy this phase.



Oddly, there had been times I didn't know if I would make it this far, but I did, and I'm happy that I have. That we all have.

Being Yourself

What would you say to your children if you only had a few days to live?



Well, this is a subject we would ordinarily dread talking about, right? In the years of Covid though the reality looms over us periodically - that people we know could suddenly pass. And so, what would I want to say?



No matter what, you need to be true to yourself? As Shakespeare said, “...this above all else, to thine own self be true...”

Being Yourself

This is much harder than it seems. You may feel compromised with the people you are in relationships with. Or, maybe you're not finding the space you need to be yourself. That can be difficult. One of the successes of your mom and I's marriage is that we have allowed each other to be as we are, and we give each other the space to be that individual person. And that has allowed us over many years to remain engaged and respecting of each other as we continue to grow.

There are a couple things I would want to tell my children and grandchildren: One is don't loan large sums of money to anyone. (Save, desperate siblings ...but still best not to). Why? Because it can ruin relationships and it can affect a relationship immediately. I advise against loaning money period.

Two, always have a certain amount of money saved so you can walk away from uncomfortable situations. That could be a range of things; from a relationship that's not going well, to unforeseen occurrences like a fire, or water damage where you live. Or, maybe you just need to get away on a vacation for some alone time. So have that little stash of cash just in case you need it.

As usual, I have always advocated to invest money in a diversified way for your future. I know this can be hard to do. I now it was very difficult for me as I started with zero dollars and

Being Yourself

a lot of debt. But if I have managed to assemble and invest a significant amount of funds over decades. I know you can do it too. I never thought I was particularly good at it. But I just kept chugging along doing the best I could. I probably could've made more but I'm pleased with having gotten as far as I did. And I hope you are as well with your efforts.

Throughout your life a lot of things will happen. Don't carry regrets internally though. This is something my mother used to tell us. She had six kids and said, "with six kids I expect just about anything, and everything, could happen from six different individuals". She would say, "You can't get it right all the time. You will make mistakes." I know that I have. Large or small affecting others or just yourself, disappointing your self. Still painful. But you have to realize that you're going to wake up the next morning and it's going to be a new day. And you can start all over again - fresh ...without regret.

Unfortunately, there will be tough times and sad times. There will be times when you will need to be strong. So, I hope you will remember this. It's especially hard when people you love pass away. It's hard for everyone and makes you realize the importance of your own life. But you won't be alone, and you have to remember to stay close with the ones you truly love through such times.

Being Yourself

Cherish your time here. It's much shorter than we think when we are younger. As we get older we find this a sobering realization.

So, know yourself, gain the most out of your life. Doing what is important to you and for your loved ones is vital. Dream big and honor the dreams of those you love. Remember to take care of yourself and cherish the things you love. Be kind to others and treat them as you would want to be.

And be happy! Find things that you love and people who make you laugh. And when you do; laugh often and love often - as much as you can.



