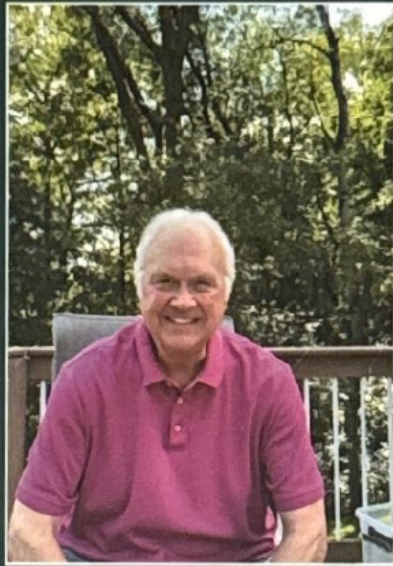


VOLUME 01

A Collection of Life Stories And Thoughts



Phil Paquette

Life Stories and Thoughts/ Phil Paquette Vol 1



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Introduction



I began writing my Storyworth book in the Fall of 2022. I plan to finish and “publish” this book sometime in late 2025. I have no idea how many generations of my family or friends might read all, or part, of these answer/stories but for those future generations here is a picture of Connie and me just before our 51st wedding anniversary.



Connie and Phil -May, 2025

When I began this journey I really had no great expectation of accomplishment, or plan of what this book might look like. However, I learned early on that the Storyworth program of weekly questions to prompt my responses was right formula for me. I also learned that I truly do love to write. I have never had any formal training in writing other than the classes I took in school—and it probably shows. I was a business major in college and required to take only one English class.

After starting out and writing the first 5-10 weekly answers, I began to feel a sense of joy, through the act of writing, the more I wrote. By the Fall of 2023, after 52 weeks, when one would

usually finish writing and publish their book, I knew I wanted to keep on writing in this format. The same happened in the Fall of 2024. Indeed, I may continue writing using the Storyworth program beyond this year after I publish this volume. We shall see.

A few other items as you prepare to read. My recollection, while pretty good, is not perfect. Seventy plus years is a long time to remember things, and my recollection may differ from yours as you read my story. Please excuse any inaccuracies as they are not intentional. I am prone, on occasion, to “going down the rabbit hole” so to speak. I have made every attempt to connect the dots in my stories but please excuse any unconnected ones. I have tried to diligently edit each one of my answers for spelling, missed words and the like. So please excuse any editing errors.

One final item. Apparently my love of writing these past three years has exceeded the printers ability to print just one book with all my stories. The book has a maximum size of 480 pages and the total of my 157 stories is about 610 pages. As a result, there will be two volumes printed each containing about half the stories.

Happy reading!

Phil

Where did you go on vacations as a child?



The entire family would go on “vacation” once a year for either one or two weeks to a cabin or a resort; usually the last week of June and/or the first week of July.

My most vivid memories of our time “at the lake” was when we spent two weeks every year at Woodland Beach Resort on Bay Lake in Minnesota, which was just north of Mille Lacs lake. We started going there in the very early 1960’s until the late 70’s -I believe. (I actually took Connie up there a few years in the early-mid 70’s but I have to say it really wasn’t her cup of tea.....)

Imagine packing a 1960 Chevrolet Impala with all the items needed for two adults and 6 kids for two weeks. (Marie wasn’t born until 1971.) I’m not sure how my dad did it, but we got everything in the trunk of that car. Our ride up north was only about 2 1/2 hours and usually only one of us kids got sick along

the way. Rich and Karen were just babies and my mom would hold him on her lap with Karen sitting in the middle front seat. The other four of us were in the back. There were no child car seats or seatbelts in cars back then so it was a bit of a “free for all” in the back seat.

There were no TV’s in the cabins; although I remember we did have a radio. There were also no phones. If a phone call needed to be made we had to go to the little store at the resort and use the pay phone on the wall. Most of the two weeks was spent down at the lake swimming or fishing on the lake. We had a small boat at our disposal for that purpose. For my part, I spent a fair amount of time reading —just like I do now -but instead of novels I read comic books. I think the Dick Tracy ones were my favorite.

One final thing to add. Our Torborg cousins (Jean and Mary and family) were also at the Woodland Beach resort the same time that we were. There was no shortage of kids to hang around and play with.

Tony

Great story Dad, thanks! Gave me a good mental picture of the family driving up in the Chevy Impala! Fun times!

What were your favorite toys as a child?



We didn't have a lot of toys when I was a child back in the 1950's. We did play indoor games with cards, primarily "WAR" and we had a checker board. What I do remember more than anything was playing outdoors with my sisters Therese and Nancy and with the dozens of other kids our age that grew up in the neighborhood. Our favorite game was "Kick the Can" and we played it most evenings in the summers. When I was an older child in the 60's, I had a bike that I road everywhere and a baseball glove. There was a small park near our house called Crowder Park that had a little league baseball field where the guys would play baseball almost every weekday night in the summers.

The thing about growing up in the 50's and 60's was that we were allowed to "roam free" pretty much unsupervised in the neighborhood. The neighborhood was an area about 6 blocks in

any direction from my house, so it was a large area to roam. The understanding I had with my parents, at least until I was about 11, was to be home when it got dark.....at about age 12 my curfew was 10:00pm.

What were your grandparents like?



I was fortunate to know all four of my grandparents. To answer the question “what were they like?” I will write about each one of them individually.

My mother’s mother, Margaret, was born in 1896 and died on my birthday (September 30) in 1965. Her cause of death was always a mystery to me. She died at St. Mary’s Hospital after being in there for a number of days. I have a vague recollection that she was diagnosed with some sort of a blood disease shortly before she died. I probably knew her the least given she died when I was just 14.

We didn’t spend much time with my grandma and grandpa Torborg; usually only seeing them on holidays. My grandma Torborg was fairly “high -strung”, generally nervous, and a real worrier, especially at those holiday gatherings at her house. (I can trace my nervousness back to her!)

I remember her fainting on at least one occasion on Christmas. It must have been around 1962 or so and all my cousins, uncles and aunts were at her house in NE Minneapolis. At the time I believe there were about 30 cousins and 12 adults in this small and cigarette smoke filled house and the cousins were running around like a bunch of crazy kids will do. Anyway, she went down for the count and that was pretty much the end of the Christmas celebration for that year. On another occasion, when I was maybe 6 or 7, I remember a number of my aunts and uncles and grandpa and grandma Torborg were at my house. I'm not sure of the occasion, but it was a pretty raucous party. Back then, I slept in a roll out couch in our little den. It was about 8:30pm and the party was just getting going. My grandma and aunt Marie thought I was asleep so they snuck into this little den and both lit up a cigarette. I knew my aunt Marie smoked but that was the first time I ever saw my grandma pull on a heater. I'm pretty sure she didn't want anyone to know that she enjoyed a cigarette now and then. I can't say I blame her though.

My grandpa Torborg (John) was born in 1888 and died in 1968. He was hit and killed crossing University Avenue by a car on his way to St. Boniface Church. That was a real shock to the whole family. My memory of him is one of a bright, reserved and kind man. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Teaching in 1910 from the Catholic Normal School in Wisconsin. A "normal school" was one that specialized in training young men in music education

back at the turn of the 20th century. Grandpa Torborg went on to be the Principal at St. Boniface School in NE Minneapolis for many years. He was also the organist and choir master at the Parish. Later in his life my uncle Jean and he started and ran a music store on Hennepin Avenue. I think they closed the store in about 1966.

I don't recall ever spending any time alone with him. He wasn't much of a sports fan and not very outgoing. His countenance could be called serene and cerebral whereas my grandma Torborg, as I noted earlier, was high strung. So, between the two they were able to strike a balance.....

My grandpa Phil Paquette was born in 1901 and died just a few days shy of his 80th birthday in 1980. (You can probably deduce that I was named after my two grandfathers, as in Philip John.) I was able to get to know him more since I was 29 when he passed away. As I recall, grandpa Phil spent his entire career with one company, the Osborne McMillan Grain Company. He began at the age of 17 working in one of their grain elevators (setting traps for the rats among other tasks) and ended up as the Executive Vice President in charge of all operations, retiring in 1960. He was only 59 when he retired! He was a very bright man and by all accounts was a very good and tough businessman. The story I heard from some of the people that worked at the company was when he walked into a room at work all talking stopped, everybody snapped to attention and were all business.

Contrast this with the same fellow who used to take me to the Minnesota Gopher football games in the late 1950's and early 60's and had tears running down his cheeks during the singing of the national anthem.

I always had the sense that he was stern but fair. I respected him very much and have tried to model myself after the attributes I felt he possessed. Forthright in my career, fair but focused, tough when one needs to be, compassion for those less fortunate and a true American patriot. Grandpa Phil was a man of strong Catholic faith. He and my grandma Bernice were long time parishioners of St Austin parish in north Minneapolis and, later on in life, at St. Olaf parish in downtown Minneapolis. They were very good friends with the pastor at St. Olaf, Monsignor Francis Fleming.

I remember an interesting conversation with grandpa Phil in the mid 70's. This was a time when there was a large push for civil rights and affirmative action reform in the US. We talked about wealth re-distribution from the wealthy to the not wealthy through tax policy and new welfare programs, as they were called back then. His belief was that you could take all the wealth in the country and divide it equally— and within 3 generations the wealth would be right back in the hands of those that it was taken from. The point being that there are certain attributes of (and benefits to) hard work, having strong supportive loving and stable families, clean living and possessing good common sense.

One of the benefits is a much greater likelihood of wealth accumulation.

My grandma Bernice Paquette was born in 1903 and died at age 87 in 1990. I spent much more time with her than any other grandparent both as a child and an adult. One way to describe her is that she “was made of good stuff”. She was a strong women, as one would need to be who buried 2 of her children. (My dad, Jerry, and my aunt Phyllis).

I remember spending time alone with her as a child since she would babysit me while my sister Nancy and Margaret were born. I have a recollection of taking a bus ride with her all over Minneapolis—probably as a way for her to kill some time with me. Apparently, I liked riding in cars and buses and didn’t get sick.....

But back to her essence. She was a very social lady who enjoyed traveling, conversation, card playing and strong whisky—which she drank neat. She was fiercely loyal to her husband, family and her Catholic faith. Grandma Bernice was always fun to be around. She loved to laugh and possessed a grateful heart for the blessings she enjoyed during her life. As an adult, I really enjoyed spending time with her. After my grandpa Phil died in 1980, my sister Karen and I handled all of her investments and taxes and would have lunch with her at least every three weeks. Her mind was 100% sharp until the day she died.

I would be remiss if I didn't share a little of her early life. She was born out of wedlock in a home for unwed mothers in northern Minnesota, run by a Catholic religious order of nuns. She was of German biological heritage but was adopted by a French family that lived in Minneapolis. (I didn't learn of this until after she died.) As a result, I always thought that she was of French heritage. She never spoke about this as these things never were back in those days.....

I have a few other memories about my grandparents' Paquette house in north Minneapolis— which faced Victory Memorial Drive. When they bought the house I don't think they gave too much thought to the length of the garage. My grandpa, as far as I remember, always drove nice cars. My grandma never had a drivers license which was common in that era. Anyway, my grandpa used to drive Oldsmobiles until about 1959 when he bought a 4 door Cadillac Sedan de Ville. If you've never seen this car, take it from me, it was huge. It had long fins on the back and was a monster of a car. I recall that when he brought it home and put it in the garage it stuck out about a foot and he couldn't lower the garage door all the way. The garage backed up to an alley and he really had no choice to do any remodeling of the garage. So for the next few years, until they sold the house, he would put a blanket on the trunk area, gently lower the garage door onto the back of the car and let the rear end hang out the back.

One final memory. When they were in the process of moving out of the house in 1962, I thought it would be a good idea to ride my bike from St. Anthony Village to their house for a final goodbye. The distance was about 7 miles. I was 10 years old. Back in that time there were no bike trails or designated paths for bikes to travel. They were ordinary city streets with little to no traffic control. One rode at their own peril. I remember walking in to the house and the look on their faces. Naturally, I hadn't told my mom about wanting to take that little excursion. I think I stayed for about an hour, got on my bike and rode home.

What are your favorite possessions? Why?



I'm going to put a little twist into this week's question regarding my favorite possessions. First, and foremost, my favorite possessions are my physical health and mental acuity. Without those, none of my other possessions would mean very much. But let's move on to a more traditional answer to the question.

A number of years ago Tony and Christina gave me a gift of a small two- sided gold locket with a picture of each of them as young children. I have kept that small locket on display in our bedroom ever since. I look at it frequently and smile every time. When I die, I would like it to be buried with me. (Unless, one of my kids would like it) The Locket reminds me of the great joy I had in parenting Tony and Christina and the tremendous amount of pride I have for the wonderful adults they've grown to be.

Another of my favorite possessions is my car. I love my car. It's a 2014 Lexus 460 AWD and has 134,000 miles on it. I spend a fair amount of time in my car and I have always enjoyed driving. I would like to point out that in 55 years of driving I have never had a speeding ticket or other moving violation....My guess is that part of the reason I enjoy this car so much is because I have had some real clunkers over the years to compare it to. I can count among them a 1973 Ford Fairlane, a 1978 Ford Thunderbird and a 1985 Cadillac Sedan de Ville. I know this isn't very "buy American" of me to say but my two best cars were a 2008 Toyota Avalon, which I had for 6 years, and the current Lexus.

I have a favorite chair. It's a grayish, plush velvet cloth number with a high back, good width and great arms. It has a matching ottoman which is exactly the right height and width to comfortably put my legs and feet upon. I have had them for about 5 years now. I recall when mom and I went to pick out MY chair and ottoman and how much mom fussed about making sure I liked it and that it was comfortable. It wasn't cheap; I think we paid about \$3,600 all in. Unfortunately for me, mom now prefers MY chair over the couch that SHE chose for herself at the same time.....As a result,we now have a verbal agreement. She gets the chair in the morning, and I get the chair in the evening. Do you see what I have to sacrifice for an amicable marriage?

Finally, my JOBST support stockings, as strange as it may sound, are a favorite possession. I have been wearing them for 35 years— different pairs as they wear out, of course, but identical. I used to suffer with significant leg thrombosis issues due to my genetic blood clotting disorder known as Factor V Leiden. Prior to discovering these stockings, I would develop phlebitis a few times a year. Since I began wearing them, I very seldom suffer leg issues. I would say that's a good reason to be considered a favorite possession.

Lastly, my St. Thomas College class ring is a favorite possession. It signifies an achievement (my Bachelor of Arts degree cum laude) which I worked very hard to get; both in the classroom and working physical labor jobs to earn 100% of my tuition over the 4 years I matriculated at St. Thomas. I graduated with no student debt and in 4 years.

I've never been one to think much about my material possessions. Indeed, we have many very nice things and I do like them. Perhaps I take them for granted but, in the end, they are just not that important to me.

What was your Dad like when you were a child?



I'm going to wander a little in my writing about this question since trying to address what my dad was "like" is hard to answer. The fact is, I never really got to know what made Jerry Paquette tick. He was not comfortable talking about his feelings, hopes or desires; at least not with me. He was also not a great active listener and certainly not during my childhood.

A little "color" before I talk more more about my dad. I spent some time thinking about the the ages 2-12, which is the usual timeframe identified as childhood. I was 2 years old in 1953 and 12 in 1963. During that time period my mom had one miscarriage (when I was about 18 months old) and four live children. All in, there were 6 of us under the age of 12 by 1961. We lived in a relatively small house of about 1300 sq. feet with an unfinished basement. We had one bathroom and no garage. We were a little tight on space. However, when one is a child you don't really care

about or recognize those kinds of things. Now, as an adult, I have to imagine that it was difficult for both my mom and dad to live in those cramped quarters with all of us. In other words, there had to be times when the household was more of a loony bin than a home.

I sent a text to all of my siblings asking for their thoughts about this week's question. My brother Rich came back with a thoughtful and insightful description of my dad during his childhood and I will "borrow" some of his thoughts. Rich remembers two versions of one man. One version is the Gerald Paquette version and the other is the Joe Tarblock.

To paraphrase Rich's words:

"Gerald was the guy who took me to gopher football games, to the store to get candy bars, to the Three Circles drive in for hamburgers and to Twins games. He enjoyed my jokes, did crossword puzzles and put up with mom's idiosyncrasies. Joe was the party animal who was always going for the big laugh. Embellishing stories and stretching the truth. He was also a guy who often drank too much, smoked too much and slept on the couch. He always seemed to smell of booze and cigarettes."

Some of my memories of dad are very much in alignment with Rich's. Add to that the fact that mom and dad were having babies every 20 months or so during my childhood and we older kids needed to fend for ourselves.

I think in some ways my dad was overwhelmed with being the father of 6 kids under age 12. I know I would be. The pressure to be the sole breadwinner for all of us had to be very difficult. I remember dad getting up every morning and going to work. He didn't travel in his job which, in my mind, was positive because he was always present in our lives although not very engaged. Unlike parenting today, I don't recall either of my parents helping with homework, being involved in our schooling, being coaches or den mothers or giving us rides anywhere.

Dad wasn't a "joiner". I don't recall that he belonged to any organizations, boards of directors, or volunteered at church. He did enjoy coming to watch me play baseball and got to many of my games.

I do have one interesting memory of my childhood which speaks to taking on responsibility at a young age and the relationship with my parents at that time. My mom and dad bowled every Friday night from about 9:00pm to 12:00am in a couples bowling league back in the late 50's and early 60's. Most of the couples were our neighbors and it was the one weekly activity, other than Sunday Mass, that my parents did together. My sister Therese and I had babysitting duty on those Friday nights when Karen and Rich were babies, Nancy was 7 and Marti was 5. Therese was 11 and I was 9. Today, it would be unthinkable to have young children that age taking care of babies alone that late at night, but that's just the way it was.....

I never had the feeling that I wasn't loved, even though I never heard my dad tell me that I was. Those types of conversations or sentiments were just not who my dad was. Nor was he unlike many fathers of that era who, in many ways, resembled the Gerald Paquette/ Joe Tarblocks of the world.

What is one of your favorite children's stories?



When I read this weeks question about my favorite children's stories I actually had to think pretty hard. To me that would indicate , perhaps, I don't really have a favorite. I also wasn't quite sure if the question was asking of a story from my own childhood to share. In any event, I decided to focus on children's stories from the 1950's.

I asked Connie if she had a favorite children's story because growing up, essentially as an only child and being read to by her parents, she would be a sure bet to have one. (Hey, give me a break, I was looking for some inspiration.....). Sure enough, her favorite story was Cinderella. I can't really argue with that since I must have developed my joy in reading love stories, with all the trimmings, somewhere. As you know, Cinderella faced great adversity in her early life with the death of her father and being taken in by her step mother. As the story progresses she is able

to overcome the adversity and fall in love with her prince. AND, of course, live happily ever after. In some manner, shape or form that pretty much summarizes the basic formula for all romance/ love stories. The other thing about most children's stories is that they have a happy ending. I love happy endings! Put another way, I do not like surprise endings. Call me old fashioned but that's the way it is. So, there you have it. Cinderella officially gets my vote.

This weeks answer to the question is considerably shorter than last week. 😊

How did you get your first job?



I have two separate stories about how I got my “first job”. My first ever job, other than cutting grass and shoveling snow for neighbors, was when I was 15 years old (1966) and in high school. My first career/professional job was after I graduated from college in 1973. I will speak to both below.

Back in the mid 1960’s, and the child labor laws in force then, you needed to be at least 15 years old to work past a certain hour at night. I think it was 6:00pm. I turned 15 on September 30, 1966 and started working at a Perkins Pancake house about 1/2 mile from my house on October 1. Back then, all of us Paquette kids were strongly encouraged to get a job when we were old enough. At age 15 we were not given any allowance and so we had to work to have spending money.

I got the job because I used to hang out at that Perkins drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes with my friends. I was like 14 then.

I got to know the manager , Jack McCool was his name , and asked him for a job. I do remember how nervous I was walking to the restaurant on the day I asked for an application of employment. He hired me for \$1.00 an hour as a dishwasher. I got a raise to \$1.05 a few months later. That's the story of my first ever job.....

My first job after graduating from college was with one of the "big eight" international public accounting firms named Ernst & Ernst. I started with them on January 2, 1974. I had learned about them and many other public accounting firms while in my last year of college after I made the decision to become a Certified Public Accountant and to pursue a professional career in accounting.

I remember when I began looking for the job my final semester at college. There were no interviews being done on campus and so I needed to prepare a "plan of action" to find firms that were looking for staff. Connie and I were engaged at the time and we prepared a list of the 25 largest CPA Firms in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area from the local phone books. I prepared a letter of introduction and a resume and sent them to each firm. I got 4 letters of interest and a request to interview from the list of 25. I interviewed with the 4 firms and, of those, I received 3 offers. One of those was Ernst & Ernst which I accepted.

It's funny, but I still remember each of those 4 interviews 49 years ago like they were yesterday.....

How did your parents pick your name?



I'm pretty sure that I was named after my two grandfathers. Philip, with one L, is on my dad's side and John is on my mom's side. An easy answer, but I have some other thoughts.

I did choose the name Thomas after St. Thomas the Apostle for my Confirmation name back in the 4th or 5th grade. I'm not sure exactly why I chose that name but Thomas the Apostle was known as "doubting" Thomas. That fits for me since I have always wondered about my faith and have many questions. Perhaps I will talk more about that later in the book.

The name Philip was not very common as far as I recall back in the 50's. In high school, I don't think there were more than a few of us with that name out of a class of 350 or so. There were a lot of Thomas's and Mike's and John's and Richard's. So having an uncommon name maybe made me feel a little "unique".

I will admit that I took pride in being named after my grandpa Phil and, hopefully, so did he. My great grandmother's name was Philomena and my grandpa was named after her. My aunt Phyllis was named after my grandpa also, I guess. So on the Paquette side there were a lot of us with the nickname "Phil".

One final comment. The problem with the name Phil is that it sounds a lot like Bill. I can't tell you how many times I have needed to correct someone when I was first introduced. But if that's the biggest problem with my name, I don't really have much to complain about.

If you could have as much money as you wanted, what would you do with it?



I will make the presumption that the question implies unlimited funds to spend as I see fit.

As I gave thought to this question many things popped into my mind about what I would do. I have thought about this question in the past. The most recent was when the Lottery got to \$2,000,000,000,000 about a week ago. Connie bought \$20 worth of tickets and, of course, we did not win. But, here are some of the items I thought about:

1. I would NEVER fly commercial again! I would have a private jet available to fly me wherever I wanted to go. Just imagine the luxury of not having to deal with the hassle of the airports. If I had a private jet, I would probably travel a little more often to see Tony and his family in Connecticut and make it available to them

and Christina's family for their use.

2. I would set up various family trusts for Connie, our kids and grandkids to assure that they had, at least, their education costs covered and basic financial security needs met. I have no idea how much money that would be. The trick is knowing how much money makes sense to gift to your family—without giving them too much. Unfortunately, I have seen situations where younger and, for that matter, even older adults make very poor life choices if they have too much money because they don't have the maturity, common sense, or discipline to handle wealth.

3. I would set up a private family charitable foundation with professional administrative support and charitable giving oversight. It would be focused primarily on helping educate kids in the non public school arena and I would designate the majority of the funds for Kindergarten through Eighth grade programs. I believe that the elementary school years are the most critical for a child's success, especially the earliest grades of Kindergarten through Third grade.

My guess is that many people who come into a large sum of money would say they would quite working. For my part, I would probably become heavily involved in the family foundation since I seem to have a philanthropic spirit and have had for many years. I find giving to those in need, and who are willing to help themselves, to be one of my great joys in life.

Has your relationship with your siblings changed over the years?



Growing up I seldom, if ever, thought of my “relationship” with my siblings. As a result, I’ve never thought much about how it might have changed. I guess I just accepted that I was one of the 7 Paquette kids who all grew up in St. Anthony Village and went to St. Charles Borromeo grade school. Individually there was nothing special about any one of us and we all got along pretty well. We would have the occasional disagreement but almost never anything too severe. However, there was this one time when my sister Nancy got really mad at me for something that I’m sure I didn’t do and she threw a deck of cards (in the box) from about 5 feet away which smacked me on the side of the face. I think I had a red spot on my cheek for a week. As I got more into my adult years, I was always impressed with the relationship that my mom had with her siblings. They were a

very close knit group. Except for their youngest sister, Peggy, who went into the convent at age 15, they all lived their lives entirely in the Twin Cities. As they aged they would get together every Friday evening to go out to dinner and then go back to my Aunt Marie's house to play cards. They also had their disagreements but there is no denying their absolute love for each other. They were the perfect role model for how adult siblings could get along in their adult years and I believe that each one of my siblings would attest to what I am saying. Clearly, it helped form a model of how we have gotten along so well in our adult years.

Social media has changed how my siblings connect and communicate with each other and, I think, our relationships. It has been a helpful tool to stay more connected with Margaret and Marie for sure because they have lived out of town for many years. We do a lot of group "texting" which is a great way to stay connected during holidays and other special occasions like birthdays. Some of us old timers, however, still pick up the phone and make a call. That's my preferred way of communicating; talking one on one with my siblings.

Today, I have varying degrees of "closeness" with each of my siblings. Karen and I have formed a very close relationship over the past 45 years (even though she is 8 years younger than me) probably due to the fact that she worked with me, early on, for 10 years in our small accounting practice.

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This question has been very challenging for me to answer. I never reflected much on how my relationships have changed with my siblings. I suppose it's inevitable that, over many decades, all relationships change in some way. Certainly, there has been a maturing of my sibling relationships (I wouldn't expect Nancy to throw a deck of cards in my face today if she got mad at me, but, then again, I wouldn't put it past her!) and a belief that each of us, if asked, would come to the aid of one another. My sense is that would have happened even in our youth and so, perhaps we are still just the 7 Paquette kids who grew up in St. Anthony Village and went to St. Charles Borromeo grade school; who learned how to get along for the long haul.....



From left to right. Karen, Marie, Therese, Phil, Rich. Picture taken in 2022.

What is one of your favorite drinks?



As usual I plan to expand the answer to this question from “one of my favorite drinks” to what have been your favorite beverages over the years?

First and foremost WATER is my most favorite drink, always has been and probably always will be. I have actually heard of people that don’t like water. I’m not sure how that’s possible but I guess it is.

I prefer my water at room (ambient) temperature but will drink it with ice. I am old enough to remember when Minneapolis began putting Fluoride in the drinking water. I think it was in the early 1960’s. There was a fair amount of controversy over it. Some say it made the water taste bad, but I always liked the flavor of the Minneapolis drinking water. So enough about water. Let’s talk about adult beverages. Coffee is also a favorite of mine. I started drinking coffee when I was about 14. It didn’t matter if

it was instant or brewed since back then we drank a lot of instant coffee. Those who know me will attest that I like my coffee weak,weak,weak. Depending on the brew, I will usually mix $\frac{2}{3}$ hot water with $\frac{1}{3}$ coffee and drink it black— no cream and no sugar. The coffee that you buy at Starbucks, for example, is way too strong for me. This includes their “blond roast blend” which is supposed to be their weakest coffee. Back in the day when I was young we drank mostly Folgers or Hills Brothers instant coffee. I would usually only use a $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon amount of coffee and drank it weak. I’m sure that’s why I like my coffee weak today.

Now onto other beverages containing spirits and a few stories. I have never drank much alcohol, even when I was in college. I hated the smell and taste of beer which is what was consumed in fairly large quantity by the fellas when I was in high school and college. Unfortunately for me, I looked like I was 22 back in high school when I was only 16. The drinking age was 21 back then and I ended up being one of the guys asked to buy the beer. I did so on occasion.....Not too smart I know but I never got “carded”. Just lucky perhaps.....

Later in my college years and when I first started working at Ernst&Ernst, I would drink either Scotch or Brandy on the rocks and perhaps wine if we were out to dinner with friends. Believe it or not, I only remember pouring myself one drink when I was home alone. It was early May of 1975 on a Wednesday evening

and I had just finished sitting for the three day CPA exam that day. I poured about a shot and a 1/2 of brandy in a class, put some music on the old stereo, sat down in a comfortable chair, drank the booze and promptly fell asleep for about 3 hours.

I was never a BIG fan of booze but did enjoy wine infrequently. My favorite wine was a red -Merlot. I also enjoyed after dinner drinks, my favorite being the B&B as in Brandy and Benedictine. I haven't consumed, for all intents and purposes, any alcohol since I was about 45. A part of the reason was because I went on warfarin (blood thinners) at that time for recurring thrombosis in the legs. I won't go into the detail on that here but perhaps later in the book. I really had no problem giving up alcohol since I really didn't care for the taste of it and also never liked the feel of getting "buzzed" while drinking. So give me a glass of water anytime and drink whatever you like.

Do you Sleepwalk or Sleep talk? What do you dream about?



I've expanded this answer to include "what do you dream about ?" since I don't believe I have ever sleep walked or sleep talked.

I do dream. A lot. My dreams are vivid and at times disturbing. Sometimes they are a little scary. Let me tell you about a few of the more recurring dreams and what I think they mean; if anything.

Ever since I graduated from college almost 50 years ago, I have a recurring dream that I am sitting at the Grill (the on campus diner where day students and faculty could get breakfast, lunch or just a cup of coffee at St. Thomas and hang out.)

The timeframe of these dreams is usually late in the fall, around Thanksgiving, and I haven't been to one particular class all semester long except for the first day. In fact, it's been so long

that I forgot the location of the classroom. To add another layer of anxiety to this, I need that particular class to graduate in the Spring. Usually in this dream I am trying to figure a way to start going to class and make up the work I missed. In another version of this dream I am trying to find my locker (back then we were assigned a locker) and then when I do I can't remember the combination to the lock. There is never any conclusion to the dream since I always seem to wake up in the middle of it.

I have been told that this is a very common dream and those that have them are generally conscientious people who worry about getting their work done and meeting deadlines. That would make sense to me being in a deadline driven business like public accounting.

Another recurring dream is where I am either walking down the street or driving my car and I struggle to open up my eyes. I am moving forward but can barely see where I am going. I have done a little research on this dream scenario and have learned that people who are not sure of their future (as in I can't see the future) or where they are "heading" have these types of dreams. Most recently I've have a recurring dream that I am in front of my classroom and teaching a subject that I know nothing about! I'm trying to answer the students questions but end up just bloviating. The interesting thing in this dream is that the students aren't aware that I'm completely clueless about the subject matter. I've not done any research as to the meaning of

this dream. I do surmise it has to do with my concern about not keeping current on all the technical changes going on in the accounting profession and knowing that I will never be as technically competent as I was in my younger years.

Was there anything unusual about your birth?



From what I was told there were a number of things unusual about my birth and for about six months afterwards.

I was a little under 5 pounds at birth on September 30, 1951. I hadn't been home for long from the hospital when I got very sick and had to return. My mom said I was in the hospital for a pretty long time trying to recover from some type of a blood infection. When I was able to return home again it was the middle of winter and the best way to keep me warm was laying me on the open door of the oven which was set at a low temperature. I guess that's the old version of an incubator. In any event, it must have worked since I'm still around. I'm pretty fairly certain that if you tried to keep a baby warm that way today you would have the child protection police at your door.

According to my mom she developed a kidney disease while pregnant with me called pyelonephritis. She claimed it was due

to me pressing on her kidney while I was in the womb. Yes, she actually blamed me for it! Not sure how that is anatomically possible, but that was her story and she stuck to it. More likely, she developed the kidney infection the old fashioned way from a uterine infection. In any event, the result for me was that I was undernourished during gestation and was born full term but underweight.

I did learn of one other unusual situation about 15 years ago that occurred when I was a newborn. I was visiting my aunt Marie at her house. My Godmother, aunt Leora, was also there as was her younger sister, my mom. I don't know how we got talking about this particular subject, but it seems that my mother had difficulty producing enough breast milk to feed me. It may have been due to her kidney issue. It turns out that my aunt Leora substituted for my mom and "wet nursed" me. Thank goodness Leora was willing to embrace her role as my godmother unlike few others. You see, my cousin Tom was born in February of 1951 and so Leora was breast feeding him and, apparently, had plenty of milk for me as well. According to my mom, said as only one sister can about another, "the milk just flowed out of Leora". Modern medicine extols the virtue of breast feeding babies and the benefit of receiving the antibodies—in this case from my aunt Leora. The practice of wet nursing was very common years ago and, as it turns out, I was fortunate that Leora was willing to accommodate me.....Leora lived a long and wonderful life dying

at age 95. Perhaps I also benefited from the antibodies received from this very strong women who bore 10 children. All I can say is thank you aunt Leora, you're the greatest.

What were your friends like in high school?



I went to an all boys high school and, therefore, most of my friends were guys from De La Salle. I played football, baseball and wrestled my first two years in school and so many of my friends were my teammates. My closer friends were mostly guys that I went to both grade school and high school, some of which are still friends of mine today. I didn't have many friends who were girls. I did have a girlfriend who I dated my junior and senior year of high school and spent a lot of time with her. So that answers the question of who my friends were but the question asked is "what were they like?"

I suspect my friends were pretty much like anyone's friends might be. They were definitely not the geeky/nerdy type but more the let's smoke cigarettes, drink a little beer and have a good time type of friends. But never drugs. We did get into our fair share of trouble and fights. Back then we settled disputes the

old fashioned way; that being with our fists.

Some of my friends were more studious than others. For me, not so much. Many of my friends had jobs at night and on weekends and I was one of those. From an “intellectual” standpoint some of my friends were very bright and some were not. The one thing it did seem that we all possessed was a fair amount of common sense. Most of my friends came from larger white Catholic families and we all had to learn to get along by using our common sense.

Most of my friends were from Minneapolis and it's suburbs. De La Salle had kids enrolled from all over the twin city area but most of my friends seemed to be from northeast and south Minneapolis and adjacent suburbs. My friends had a loosely defined gang called the NEO (North East Organization). I guess I was a member; although we didn't really have any formal structure or initiation. Back then, there were a lot of "gangs" in various geographic areas of the twin cities. Unlike gangs today, though, we were not into drugs, violence and breaking the law. In a sense we were more of a club but we stuck together , especially if one of us was having trouble with kids from other schools or gangs.

I attended our 50 year high school reunion in 2019. I was a little surprised and somewhat disappointed with the turnout. There were only a handful of guys there who I would have considered in the friend category and a lot of them missing who I thought of

as friends. But life goes on and friends come and go—especially high school friends. I just count myself as fortunate that there are a few of us who are still friends, alive and healthy after all these years.

What were your favorite subjects in high school?



As strange as this may sound, I don't recall having any "favorite subjects" in high school. There were a couple of teachers that I liked but no real favorites. My overall high school experience was not the greatest and I did my best to "skate" through those 4 years. However, that's not to say I didn't learn some valuable life lessons at De La Salle and I will share two of those below:

1. You get out of life what you put into it. The very fact that I sloughed off my high school years taught me that I better try a lot harder in college. I did not study much in high school and skipped a ton of classes after my freshman year. The school was actually a co-conspirator in this because, after my freshman year, they went to an open campus (think of college where you could go to class or not and nobody cared) This program was part of a failed education model called modular scheduling. The

modular scheduling model was necessary to accommodate 1300 boys in a facility built for about 800.

2. Nobody was going to give me a free ride. I learned this the hard way. I was a first semester senior at De and, after applying, was accepted by St. Thomas College. The funny is that my grade point average in high school was about a 2.5, I think. I took the ACT (or whatever the college entrance exam was at the time) and got immediately accepted by St. Thomas on the basis of that score. Two of my friends from De (Jim Renckens and Mark Murlowski who my parents knew well) were also accepted and their parents were going to pay for all the tuition, books and other costs. Shortly after being accepted at St. Thomas my mom and I sat down over the Christmas break and she told me they couldn't help with ANY of my college costs. She did say I could live at home while I was going to college. But that was it.

I remember that conversation like it was yesterday. (I'm sure it was hard for my mom to deliver the news and I respect her for being honest with me. It didn't go unnoticed to me that my dad was not present for this conversation or ever said anything about it.) After our talk, I recall leaving the house and getting into my old 1960 Chev and driving around trying to figure out what in the heck I was going to do. That's when the realization hit me. There will be no free rides and I was on my own. I had jut turned 17 a few months earlier.....

While my high school education was not good, my grade school education was very good. I have always been a voracious reader and good with mathematics and St. Charles Borromeo Grade school helped me develop both my reading and math skills. My writing ability was actually developed later in college and continued developing as I wrote more in business and then for pleasure. I believe it to be true when “they” say reading, writing and arithmetic are the keys to success. And by the way, the math and arithmetic was all done in my head and written by pencil on paper. There were no calculators at that time.

An interesting note. De La Salle high school awarded me their annual Lasallian Award in 2017. This award “ Recognizes and honors select De La Salle graduates and friends whose current efforts and achievements uniquely reflect St. John Baptist De La Salle’s vision of Christian leadership, support of education and service for the world in which they live. Their continued efforts are worthy of their honor, support and gratitude.” Who would’ve thought?

I will plan to write more about my favorite subjects in college, since there were many, at a later time. My college experience was the real pivot point in my life from both a personal growth and academic standpoint.

Did you have any serious accidents as a child?



I don't recall any serious accidents that I was involved in growing up. I did have a few injuries that I vividly recall and will share them below.

1. I must have been about 10 or so. A bunch of us kids were playing baseball at Crowder park in St. Anthony Village and I decided it would be a good idea to play catcher without wearing a mask. As luck would have it, I took a foul ball right smack between the eyes. It hurt like there was no tomorrow. I don't recall bleeding all that much but the pain was unbelievable! I went home and the next day both of my eyes were black and blue and just about swollen shut. I needed to wear sun- glasses for about a week because it was so painful on my eyes to be in the sunlight.

I never went to the doctor for this. (Back in those days you just toughed it out. At least that's what my dad told me.) I learned a

number of years later (25 years or so), at a routine physical, that I had probably broken my nose and deviated my septum because, after looking at my nose, the doctor asked me when I broke it. Apparently, it didn't heal straight and the insides of my nose are crooked.

I don't think I ever got behind the plate without a mask after that. 😊

2. I was a sophomore in high school and on the varsity baseball team. Yes, my position was catcher and I was pretty good. A few of my "friends" and I skipped a practice, since it had been raining that morning, and we weren't sure if practice had been canceled or not. It turns out it wasn't. The coach, Joe Shrake, was not happy and made us run wind sprints for the course of an entire game which, for the most part, I did.

The next morning my right foot was pretty sore but I went to school. About midday it was so sore I couldn't walk on it. I recall being excused from school and hopping on one foot about 4 blocks to the bus stop and then another 4 blocks, after I got off the bus, to get home. I rode my bike to the doctor where they took an x-ray of my foot and found out I had a hole in my heel bone.

According to the doctors, there was a hard tissue cyst in the middle of the heel bone that separated when I was running those sprints for over two hours. It didn't help that I was wearing steel spiked baseball shoes and was running on a concrete surface.

Interestingly, the only thing I could do was to stay off of it as much as possible. I was on crutches for a good part of the summer that year but it healed and I've not had any trouble since.

What was your best boss like?



I'm hard pressed to pick one best "Boss". I have had many bosses over my 56 years of working and they each had good and bad attributes—at least from my vantage point. As I thought about this question there were 4 people who resonated with me (meaning they were instrumental in both my personal and professional growth at the time I needed it most) I believe that the best bosses are the ones who mentor us and each one of mine certainly did that. I will describe each one below saving the best for last. As a preamble, I was able to pay for 100% of my college tuition, books, the car I was driving and "pocket money" because I was fortunate to get high paying manual labor jobs during college. There was one company in particular, Abrams Meat Distributors, where I worked my junior and senior year of college. It was located just 8 minutes from my house in northeast Minneapolis. Without that job it's somewhat doubtful I could have completed college in 4 years. It was, I suspect, by the Grace

of God that I got the job.

One of the owners, Bruce Abrams, was in charge of operations in the refrigerated warehouse and I put him in a best boss category. Bruce was a good man and fair to the people who worked for him. He was usually at work by 6:00am and stayed until 4:00pm most days. He had a “way about him” that you knew he was in charge but he also worked as hard, if not harder, than anyone else in the warehouse. He expected that the people who worked for him could and would think for themselves and do the job right. Bruce was always steady as you go, had a good sense of humor and lived for his family (and golf). In other words, he taught me to live my life in a way that you focus on what’s most important. Certainly, work was part of that but it was all about his family and taking care of them. For me, the focus was to complete my degree in 4 years and Bruce continually encouraged me along that journey. He died not that long ago. I don’t think I ever went back to Abrams to thank him. But I should have.....

Dan Sevenich was a teacher of mine in the early 1970’s at St. Thomas who mentored me when I began teaching there in 1981. Dan was an excellent teacher and CPA practitioner who was always willing to help me navigate my professional life: be it as a teacher or a CPA with a small practice. He was also a man to be respected for his faith and family values which showed me what being “holistically successful” (defined by the 5 areas of

Spiritual, Wellness, Relational, Career, and Financial) looks like. I had tremendous respect for Dan and met with him frequently the first 2 years I was teaching. His insight into how to run a classroom, stay focused, on track, keep discipline and manage my time was something I really needed those first few years..

Frank Liguori Sr. was the majority owner of Scruples Professional Salon Products Company. I met him in 1983 when he, along with Jack Storey, started the company. At the time I was a 32 year old guy with a small accounting practice who was teaching a full time load at St. Thomas. I was an advisor to Scruples and then a minority owner until we sold the company in 2017. Frank loved the beauty business. I put Frank in the best boss category because of my over 30 year association with him (and Jack) and some really good business lessons:

1. Treat your employees and customers fairly, honestly and with compassion.
2. Keep your focus on what the company does. Don't get sidetracked into other business deals to the detriment of the company.
3. Know the numbers. Stay on top of your expenses and know your cash flow.
4. Scruples sold its products exclusively to beauty salons through a network of 75 individually owned distributors world wide. He never deviated from that business model, although a number of

his competitors did by selling directly to Salons and undercutting the local distributor.

5. If a Salon got into financial difficulty and was unable to stay current on its account with us, Frank would always try to work out an arrangement for the distributor. He used to say, “it doesn’t do us any good to squeeze the distributor so hard for payment that we put them out of business.” We were, perhaps, too lenient at times. However, in the long run, some of those financially distressed distributors became our best customers and were loyal to our brand.

Tom Margarit of Boyum Barenscheer was my most favorite and best boss. He was managing partner of the Firm the entire time I was at Boyum. I came back to the firm in 2007 after many years away from public accounting and Tom is the primary reason I did. I had first met Tom in 1991 when he was a manager at the Firm (I merged my small accounting firm into Boyum in 1990) and we stayed connected after I left in 1993. When I was in the process of transitioning out of Belair in about 2006, Tom and I began discussing the possibility of me rejoining the firm as a partner. I had the luxury of getting to know Tom well over that time especially his philosophy of running the organization and vision for the future. As it turned out, my role at the Firm, as we grew rapidly, became a sort of chief operating officer and Tom was the CEO. Our beliefs and management styles were well

aligned and complimentary and, I believe, we trusted each other implicitly. Tom is a person of true humility and integrity. He cares deeply for the Firm, its personnel and clients. He is also one of the nicest people I have ever met and from that perspective we are somewhat different! It's been 16 years since I rejoined the firm and Tom retired as managing partner in 2021. We had a great and prosperous run and it was mostly due to having a boss like Tom.

What do you like most about your siblings?



I have six siblings. They are:

Therese born November 7, 1949

Nancy born September 18, 1954

Margaret born March 31, 1956

Karen born April 30, 1959

Rich born September 4, 1960

Marie born September 2, 1970

I am the second oldest having been born September 30, 1951. Our mother had a miscarriage between myself and Nancy in 1953, I believe.

I don't believe that people often think about the question "What did you like most about your siblings?" I know I didn't until this week's question. I've given it a fair amount of thought this week and will share those thoughts below.

1. FOR THE MOST PART WE GET ALONG WELL. Perhaps it's the combination of 5 sisters with just 2 brothers spaced apart as we were that helped us do that. For my part I was surrounded by sisters for the first 9 years of my life and just took for granted an almost all female house. We had our fair share of differences but I don't recall a lot of fights or lasting grudges. That's probably due to the fact that it was an almost all female house.

We lived in a 1350 square foot home with one little bathroom to share. If you think about it, we really knew no other way than to get along. As I've gotten older it seems to me that the skill of "just getting along" is probably one of the top life skills we need to learn in order to succeed in life.

2. WE STAY CONNECTED. I can't say that this was ever a problem when I was in high school and college since I lived at home until I got married at age 22. However, as we all grew older, married and then left the house it was naturally more difficult to stay connected. My sisters seem to do a much better job of this than I do and I am truly thankful for their efforts in this. Even now, with both Marti and Marie living many miles away in different states I still feel a closeness with all my siblings. It has never been out of sight out of mind for me where it comes to them.

We did have a strong model for this connectedness, as I have written in an earlier question, with my mother's side of the family and the closeness of the Torborg clan. I will also note that our mother was very intentional in trying to keep us connected

and not just for holidays. One thing for sure that would have broken her heart (and I think dad as well) is if we were constantly fighting and holding grudges to the point that one of us became alienated from the family.

3. WE HAVE A COLLECTIVE SENSE OF HUMOR. When we were young adults, and my dad was still alive, some of the happiest times as a family would be to gather at my mom and dad's house on Saturday morning. All the younger kids would be there too and we would have some coffee and just sit around talking and laughing as a family. Each of us has the ability to be a little self deprecating and to not take ourselves too seriously. That's a godsend in a family our size.

To this day when we get together we are almost always laughing and enjoying each other's company. We tend to not speak about too many heavy subjects such as politics, religion and crime so, perhaps, we could be accused of being superficial. However, when the chips are down we have always supported each other through thick a thin.

What was your first big trip?



I think my first big trip may surprise you.

It was summer 1959. I was just 7 years old and accompanied my dad on a one week road trip that went from southern Minnesota through South Dakota to northern Nebraska. From what I recall, the purpose of the trip was for my dad to call on the country elevators that he did business with. (My dad was a grain trader and worked in downtown Minneapolis at the Grain Exchange from about 1950 to 1985.)

I have no idea why I went on the trip, other than my mom probably thought it would be a good idea to give HER a weeks vacation from me.

That week was, quite possibly, the most boring week of my life. Literally, all we did was drive from one country elevator to another. The scenery was one wheat field after another for 8 hours a day. The highlight of my days on that trip was when we

would stop in a small town for lunch. I still remember the blueberry pie that was served in those small town restaurants.....YUMMMMY!

The trip, however, was not all that memorable except for one little episode. My dad met up with a business associate when we were in Pierre (I think) South Dakota for dinner one evening. I remember him telling me that he was going out for dinner and would be back a little later. I recall that it was quite late when he returned to the motel, like 11:00pm. It was pretty clear that they enjoyed more than a few libations at dinner . I didn't think much of it during the trip since I fell asleep watching TV and only awoke when he returned to the room. When we got home from the trip my mom found out that he had left me alone for about 5 hours in the room and had plenty to drink at dinner. She got so mad that she "went off the deep end" so to speak.

In retrospect, this was one of the first experiences I had around my dad's drinking and memorable because of the rage that my mom felt. She was absolutely flabbergasted, not that my dad had been out drinking—she knew him too well for that, but that he left a 7 year old boy alone in a motel room in a strange city at night for 5 hours. Nothing happened to me, of course, and my dad figured as much when he went out that evening. I don't think he ever gave it a second thought.....until he got home and had to face the wrath of Elaine.

Which sports did you play in high school?



I played three different sports in high school. I played football, wrestling and baseball my freshman and sophomore years and only football my junior year. I quit playing sports the middle of my junior year and will talk more about that later.

The highlight of my high school sports career was actually freshman football my first semester at De La Salle. It was the one team and experience that I remember the most from high school. I recall the first evening (we had to practice in the evening because De had only one small field in the back of the school and the varsity team practiced during the day. It wasn't really a football field but more of a vacant lot that was mostly dirt— no grass). The tryouts were about a week before school started and, other than the kids from St. Charles grade school, I didn't know anyone. We met, that first night, in the locker room at the school and there must have been 150 guys at that meeting. Our coach

was a guy from the south side of Chicago by the name of John Clark. He was one tough SOB and the head wrestling coach to boot. His philosophy was that he didn't make any cuts so the first few days of "practice" was conditioning that weeded out at least half the 150 and, by the time the season began, we were down to about 50 guys. I was the staring center on the offensive line and back then if you were a starter you played the whole game unless you were injured. There was no "everyone gets a chance to play" mentality back then. Our team went 10-0 that season. Over his 4 years as freshman football coach his teams were a combined 36 wins and 1 loss!

I had no intention of wrestling at De but coach Clark asked me to tryout for the team. I wrestled heavyweight. I think I was 6'1 and about 235 pounds when I was a freshman. I can't say I actually enjoyed the sport but I learned early on how to defend myself in any one on one situation. I was a pretty good wrestler. There was no freshman wrestling team; only the Junior Varsity and Varsity teams. My freshman year I wrestled to a 4 wins and 2 losses record mostly against guys who were juniors.

I lost interest in sports the end of my sophomore year, although I did play football in the fall of my junior year. Part of it was that I didn't like the coaches all that well. (Mr Clark left De after my freshman year and went to teach and coach at Totino Grace high school which opened up in 1970. That very well may have had something to do with it. I had a lot of respect for him).

My mom didn't really care for sports. She was a big believer that kids should get a job as soon as possible and she was putting pressure on me to do just that. I spoke earlier in another question about the fact that I got a job the fall of my sophomore year in 1966. I worked weekends since I was still playing sports but over time that became very difficult to do.

As a side note, perhaps, I played baseball at St. Charles grade school and enjoyed that a lot. I was the starting catcher in 7th and 8th grades and we had a very good team. We made the Twin City Catholic baseball league finals both those years. Our coach, Lou Mittico was a dedicated guy and a strong disciplinarian. He knew baseball and loved to coach. I think Lou is still alive. He must be 95 years old.....

In the end it all worked out. I have many fond memories of the time I played sports and all the guys I played with. And I really have no regrets about not playing sports after the fall of my junior year.

Which musicians or bands have you most liked seeing live?



I have not been to any concerts of what used to be called “pop” or “rock band” musicians. I do know a lot of peoples that loved to go to rock band concerts back in the 1960’s and 70’s. I was not one of them for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, I wasn’t a big fan of most of that type of music. Secondly, I couldn’t afford it.

I do listen to a lot of music. Much of it is classical or “light” classical as some of it is called now a days and I have been to a number of symphony performances over the years. There was one about 10 years ago by the Minnesota Symphony orchestra where they played Beethoven’s 6th symphony otherwise known as his Pastoral symphony. That particular piece of music is one of my all time favorites. As far as classical composers my two favorites are Beethoven and Mozart.

I also like to listen to what is called “Spa” music; defined as any type of relaxation music. A lot of Spa music takes cues from nature such as ocean wave sounds, rain falling, creeks running and birds singing. When I read, I usually listen to this type of relaxation music. On most days I usually read about 2 hours and therefore listen to Spa music about that much.

I also like to listen to certain classical musicians play. I am especially fond of the Flutist James Galway and Violinist Kelly Hall -Tomkins. If they were to come to Minnesota and do a live concert that would be a performance I would like to see.

I like to listen to the music of certain Spa or relaxation musical songwriter/artists like Phil Coulter, Karen Marie Garrett and Doug Hammer. It’s hard to adequately define the type of music that these artists write although I looked up a definition of Coulter’s work and it said it was “contemporary classical Celtic.”

I like opera music. I did go to a Luciano Pavarotti concert about 35 years ago. He was a great Italian Tenor and used to be called the “King of the High C’s” for his vocal ability to hit that note in the arias he sang. I also like to listen to Andrea Bocelli, although he is definitely not of the same operatic or vocal quality as Pavarotti.

Perhaps one last comment on music I DON’T like. That would be pretty much all of the current and “famous” music artists of today like Beyonce”, Ariana Grande and Madonna. If I were invited to one of those concerts, even if it was free to me, I would

take a pass....

How do you prefer to travel?



I've never been an avid traveler. I am much more of a "home body". However, I have done a lot of traveling over my life, both for business and for pleasure, and I have a number of thoughts about my preferences.

My preferred method of travel is by car. It's not so much that I like to travel by car but ,rather, I really dislike the whole experience around traveling by air.

I did a fair amount of air travel early in my public accounting career. (This would have been back in the 1970's). Traveling by air in those days was much different than today. First off, there were far less people traveling by air and most of the folks were traveling for business. There would be very few people under the age of 21 on airplanes. Back then, there was no security check in. You went to the front desk area, got your paper ticket, checked your luggage and went to the gate. No hassle and very little

waiting. One other item that I do recall that wasn't so great is that everyone smoked on the planes. It no exaggeration to say the air was blue with all the cigarette smoke. Thankfully, they didn't allow cigar or pipe smoking even back in those olden days. I have never liked to stay in hotel rooms which is another reason I don't care to travel. I've been in some of the nicest and some of the worst rooms over the years. It doesn't make much difference to me— I just don't like hotel rooms. I remember staying in “motels” for out of town client work back in the 70's that cost anywhere from \$15 to \$25 dollars a night. I've also stayed in some hotel rooms that cost more than \$1,000 a night. Both the cheap and the expensive rooms served the purpose of providing me a place to sleep at night. And I didn't care for any of them.

I have not traveled much by rail here in the US even though it's an interesting way to travel and generally pretty comfortable. Connie and I have traveled by rail a fair amount while in Europe. Those trains are clean, comfortable AND they run on time.

Connie and I have taken a number of trips on ships and River Cruise boats. It's a convenient way to travel and to sightsee at the same time. Over the course of our lifetime, I estimate that we have taken 5 or 6 trips by ship and the same number of river cruise trips.

That's about it for this subject. So if I must travel, for the most part, let me get into my car and drive.....

Do you know what your first words were?



This is an interesting question because I'm not sure anyone could remember their first words, which would probably have been spoken as an infant. More likely, it would be one's parents or older siblings who heard the first words and then told you what they were a few years later. In any event, I don't remember my first words and nobody ever told me what they were. However, allow me to make a few educated guesses as to what my first words might have been and I will add a little "context" as well.

My first words might very well have been "Is it time to eat yet?" Let's face it, anyone who knows me knows I like to eat and have from a very young age. I know for a fact that before I left the house to go "free range" playing in the neighborhood during the summer I always knew what time supper was going to be ready. My mom wasn't much for making breakfast or lunch but

she always had a great supper ready for us.

Perhaps my first words were “I didn’t do that!” or “ I wasn’t playing with that ”. For as many times as I was blamed for things my sisters did, I’m pretty sure I was speaking those words early on. More specifically, both my mom and dad thought my older sister Therese was a little angel and could do no wrong. Couple that with the fact that she had rheumatic fever when she was a child and one would have thought the Church Sainted her when she was not yet 7. All I ever heard when Therese was little and didn’t want to do something was “ I have rheumatic fever and I can’t get out of bed.” If I heard that once I heard it a thousand times.

There are some first words that I recall that were spoken to me. My dad used to tell me to get my “head out of the refrigerator”almost daily. He used to joke that I’m the only kid who got frostbite on my nose in July—from constantly having my head in the freezer looking for ice cream to eat. He thought that was pretty funny. Another favorite line my dad had for me when he didn’t like something I was doing was “what’s the matter with you?” I was never sure how (or if) I should answer that. Most of the time I would shrug my shoulders and say,” I don’t know”. I mean, what else can you possibly say; “I’m an idiot or I’m demented“ would probably have been something my dad would agree with.....

Anyway, I hope you realize that much of the above is written in jest and for a little levity. At the end of the day, and as I have said before in this book, it must have been extremely difficult to raise 7 kids as my mom and dad did. As you might imagine keeping order among the chaos had be the first priority. And they did a pretty good job of it. They also succeeded in keeping a safe and happy household where we all got along very well. The dividend from that happy home environment is the great relationship that I and all my siblings currently have to this day.

Why have you been Philanthropic, especially for Catholic Schools?



I looked up the definition of “philanthropist” and here’s what it said:

“A person who seeks to promote the welfare of others, especially by the generous donation of money, time and talent to good causes.”

That being the definition, then, I guess I have been a lifelong philanthropist. I have donated a significant amount of money and time to many charitable causes and continue to do so to this day. If I had more talent I probably would have donated that as well.....

I’m not exactly sure why I have been so philanthropic during my adult life. Growing up, my family wasn’t particularly philanthropic, nor did they have the money to be. My parents were regular Sunday Church goers and did put money in the

collection basket, but there was no time spent volunteering for charitable causes that I recall. Neither my mom nor dad were involved in any charitable organizations or even active at our grade school or high school. So following in my parents footsteps is certainly not the reason.

Please understand that I'm not criticizing them for their lack of involvement. The good Lord knows that they had all they could handle with the 7 of us kids alone. Other parents were involved to some degree but this was mostly helping to coach their kids in sports and getting involved in programs like scouting.

The first "out of the box" time/talent charitable work I did was to teach Catholic CCD—Confraternity of Christian Doctrine—classes— now called Faith Formation, on Saturday mornings during the school year at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Northeast Minneapolis. I did this for 3 years starting in 1968. (I was a Junior in High School). The classes were an hour and a half long and my class that first year was third grade. I know precisely why I became involved in this program. My girlfriend at the time, Charlene Keefer, and good friend Denny Felicetta both taught and they asked me to teach. For the most part, I enjoyed teaching and was pretty good at it. I know I learned a number of valuable life skills teaching at such a young age like how to be organized, focused, on task and give a good presentation. I'm not sure at the time I realized the benefits of teaching as I have described above but it was overall a positive learning experience

for me.

I know I have told this story many times. When I was a first semester senior in College I knew I didn't have enough money to have my tuition paid 100% by Spring graduation. Back then, if tuition wasn't paid there was no Diploma. I felt like my back was really up against the wall. I went to the "financial aid" office at St. Thomas—which consisted of just a few people at that time—and, to make a long story short, was given a grant to cover the balance of my unpaid tuition. It was a little over \$500 if my memory serves me right. I think the total tuition was \$2,200 for the year. The money came from a Northeast Minneapolis family who owned some businesses and were known by the financial aid staff at St. Thomas to give scholarships to seniors with very good academic records and who were just one semester from graduation. I was a good student in college and was in the top 10% of my graduating class and met the criteria.

I recall the moment I was told about the grant. I had been called to the financial aid office, nervous as all get out and probably puffing on a cigarette, and all the fellow told me was "congratulations, your tuition balance was covered by a friend of the school". He wouldn't tell me who the friend/family was and I didn't press him for it.

The only way to express how I felt walking out of that office is to say I had a Cathartic experience. It was the first time to my recollection that I had been given anything; outside of my family

providing for my basic support. It was literally like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

I don't know how much I thought then about how, or why, this family was so magnanimous or how it would affect my generous spirit . But over the years I have thought about their generosity on many occasions. I recall fondly that Cathartic feeling and have enjoyed giving to those in need for over 40 years as a result.

Who did you date while in high school?



The list of who I dated in high school is very short. One young lady by the name of Charlene Keefer. I began dating her in the summer of 1967 until the summer of 1969. Those years covered my junior and senior years in high school. We “went steady” over that two year period; as was the custom back in the day. The going steady part was evidenced by a ring given to the girl which she always wore. In my case, I didn’t have a ring to give so I went and found one that one of my buddies had and was willing to sell. I think it cost me \$5.....

Charlene’s family were life long neighbors of ours. They lived one block away from us on St. Anthony Boulevard. We were always friends going back to our days in grade school at St. Charles Borromeo and played together with all the other children in the neighborhood. My first recollections are sitting on the steps of her house when we were kids eating candy, or whatever,

and watching the traffic go by on the boulevard. I think I was maybe 5 or so.

I don't remember precisely how we went from friends to dating. I do recall going to a couple of movies with her in the late summer of 1967. I didn't have a drivers license yet and so we walked about a mile (and back) to the old Hollywood Theatre at night. To her credit, she was "game enough" to do it. I'm fairly certain her other girlfriends weren't walking to the local theatre with their dates. (She would have been close to 17 1/2 at the time. She was 16 months older and a school year ahead of me.)

Charlene had a "very large" personality and was extremely outgoing. Her mother, Marge, was an interesting ,100% Italian, lady that loved to play practical jokes on people and have fun. Her dad, Bill, was of German descent and a very successful State Farm insurance agent and real estate investor. They were members of the local county club and were in the circle of the "wealthy gentry" in St. Anthony Village.

Charlene was very musical and learned to play the organ at a young age. Later in her adult life she was the church organist at her parish for 43 years.

One might find the similarities interesting between Charlene and my wife Connie. Both are half Italian and half German and come from relatively well to do families. And they both have outsized personalities. Go figure.

Sadly, Charlene passed away in the fall of 2022. She was only 72 years old. I hadn't stayed in touch with her much after I was age 19 or so. She married and had 4 boys. I did go to her Wake and was able to say an earthly final goodbye. I have and will continue to have a very soft spot in my heart for her. May she rest in peace.

Have you ever doubted your faith?



I think a lot about my faith and have for many years. By nature, I have always been curious and tended to ask many questions. When I was little, I remember my dad always admonishing me for asking too many questions. “Philip why do you need to know that?” or “Why do you care about that?” However, I grew up undeterred and have asked lots of questions over my years. When I worked as an auditor and, generally, in business my proclivity to ask the “right” questions helped me immensely.

But let’s turn to faith. I think this week’s question could be amended to “Have I ever doubted my faith in God?” Let’s use this definition of faith which I found online: “A strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension (fear that something bad will happen) rather than proof.” My simple answer is that I have never doubted my faith in the existence of a God but I have doubted my faith regarding

the doctrines of a religion, or the theological musings of those with a human voice.....

Growing up Catholic and going to Catholic schools, I was well versed in the teaching/ doctrines of the church. My mom and dad were good role models of the modern Catholic family attending Mass every Sunday come rain or shine. There were many stories of saints and martyrs who died for Christ that were spoken about by the Nuns at school. I regularly received the sacraments of the Church growing up. I probably went to confession every two weeks or so when I was in grade school. I don't think I missed Sunday Mass until I started working on Sunday mornings at 6:00am at my first job at Perkins in 1966. During this era there were very few, if any, public scandals surrounding the church such as priests abusive behavior. It was a quiet and wonderful time. However, we now know that was a mirage.

From a doctrinal and religious practices standpoint much changed in the mid 1960's after the Second Vatican Council. Also, in the early 1980's the priest abuse scandals starting coming to light. I mention these as they certainly had an impact on my faith in the doctrine and practices of the church and of those responsible for administering the sacraments, namely the clergy. As a person who admits to being, perhaps, too cynical for my own good I have had many doubts surrounding the strict practicing of one religion over another and its impact on whether or not one gets to Heaven.

I took 3 years of Bible study classes about 25 years ago. At the time I was considering entering the lay/permanent diaconate program of the Catholic Church and wanted to become more knowledgeable of both the Old and New Testament. The program was actually sponsored by the Baptist church and was a very good study of the Bible. I learned a lot. As it turned out I never entered the diaconate but I learned much about what connects all Christian faiths and that's the Bible and our belief in Jesus Christ and God. Even the Catholic Church began acknowledging after Vatican II that one doesn't need to be Catholic to get to Heaven. In my mind that was a huge change in the Catholic Church and focused my faith more on active Christianity and my relationship with God.

Have you pulled any great pranks?



I have never been much of a “prankster”. In fact, I don’t recall ever initiating a prank on anyone, so I don’t have much to write on this subject. I did witness a few pranks that were funny and there is one in particular I can write about. (There were a number of “locker room” pranks in high school that I witnessed that won’t be put into print—-at least not by me)

It was my junior year in college and Mark Murlowski, Jim Renckens and I took an evening class on income taxation. Our teacher was Mr. Dan Sevenich. I have written about him previously, as one of the most influential people in my life, and so I’m a little sad that this prank was played on him. However, no harm no foul as they say.

As a by the way, Mr. Sevenich and Jim’s dad, Dick Renckens, were classmates at St. Thomas in the late 1940’s and knew each other professionally since they were both CPA’s.

Mr. Sevenich always wore a suit and tie, as was the custom in 1972, and was a true gentleman. He was conservative, a good Catholic, a very knowledgeable teacher and a hard working family man.

We were in a fairly small classroom with maybe 22 students in total. Mr. Sevenich stood behind a table top desk on which stood a small podium for his book. The book was a big, thick compilation of the income tax code such as it was back in 1972. (Think of a big, thick Bible as an example). The class started at 7:00pm and it seemed that Mr. Sevenich was always in a rush to get there and usually arrived about 7:01. He would walk in at a hurried pace, stand in front of the Podium and slam the big book down on it to get our attention.

Jim Renckens was the prankster in our group. He thought it would be fun to pull a little prank and so he decided to unscrew the bolts that held the podium top to the legs leaving the podium top unsecured. Jim, Mark and I were the only ones who knew about it since we had arrived about 20 minutes early that evening to get everything set up. Well, true to form, Mr. Sevenich rushed into class and slammed his book onto the podium.

By the sound of it you would have thought a bomb went off in that little classroom. Both the podium and the book crashed to the floor and Mr. Sevenich along with 19 other students just about had heart attacks. Mr. Sevenich originally thought he had broken the podium but on further inspection he figured out what

had happened. To his credit he laughed it off and, without missing a beat, proceeded to teach the class. I'm pretty sure he knew it was Jim that did it all along but he never said anything about it.

How did you decide to get married?



I've pondered this weeks question since Monday and it's Friday today. So I've given the "How did I decide to get married?" question more thought than usual. I'm going to speak a little to how things were 50 years ago as a prelude to talking specifically about my decision to get married.

I met Connie when I was a senior in college. She was a junior. We began dating over the Christmas break in December of 1972. (We were both on track to graduate from college in 4 years— which we did.) Back in those days, it was not unusual to get married in your early twenties, especially if both people were out of school. In fact, my three closest friends at the time were all married by the time they were 23. When I got married in 1974, I was 22 and Connie had just turned 22 a few weeks before.

I say all this because the "decision" to get married was more of a "this is what you do" when you have been dating someone for

more than a year. Also, back in the early 70's, it was not as socially acceptable to live with someone out of wedlock as it is today. The norm today seems to be to live together before getting married for a period of time and then decide if marriage is the next step. Many times it's not.

Another item back 50 years ago, when looking to get married, was the religion of the prospective spouse. "Mixed marriages" were considered people of different faiths getting married. For Catholics this was a very strong consideration. I know it was for me. I don't believe it is today.

So back to my decision to get married. There's no doubt that I was smitten the first time I saw Connie Schroeffer in the early fall of 1972. We didn't begin dating "in earnest " until December but, once we did, it became clear to me that she was the one. Perhaps I made the decision right then. When considering the other factors laid out above the decision to get married was pretty easy. One could almost say that all the stars had properly aligned when we met since we were both smitten, going to graduate college in the next year, we were both Catholic, and our families were strongly in favor of the marriage.

We became engaged in April, 1973 just 4 months after we began seriously dating and were engaged for 14 months before we married. And as they say " the rest is history".

What are some of the most important elections you've voted in, and what made them important to you?



This week's question is an interesting one. I wouldn't have ever thought about writing on this subject. The more I ponder it, though, the more things come to mind that I will speak to. And they won't necessarily be limited to just which elections were important to me.

As a point of clarification, I have cast many votes that were not for a political office. Business shareholder and Partnership votes are two examples. However, I believe the spirit of this question relates to political office elections and I will focus on those.

I did some research of the presidential, Minnesota governor and Minnesota congressional election results from the time I was old enough to vote. I was age 21 on September 30, 1972 and therefore

was old enough to vote in the November 1972 presidential and other elections. I have voted in all elections since then.

The presidential election of 1972 pitted Richard Nixon against George McGovern. Not surprisingly, I remember voting in that election like it was yesterday and not because it was a close race. (Nixon ended up with 61% of the vote, which is a landslide as the pundits like to say). But rather it was my first election. I did vote for Nixon primarily because he was getting us out of the Vietnam war and I had no desire to fight in that debacle. As it turned out the war ended in March of 1973 and the rest is history.

Another important election was the November 2000 presidential election of Al Gore vs George Bush. The election was very close with Gore winning the popular vote and Bush winning the electoral vote and therefore the election. (This is a republic after all!) The election results dragged well into December and were decided when Bush won the electoral votes in Florida. The process to decide who won Florida took weeks to determine because there were contested recounts by hand that took place in a few of the major counties in Florida. By the way, I voted for Bush.

Anyone living in Minnesota, who is not a Democrat, knows how frustrating it is to try and get a republican/conservative voted into office in this state. This last election with Jensen vs Walz is a good example. I really believed Jensen had a chance but, in the end, Walz won because of the Democratic “machines” in the

Twin Cities and Duluth. Pretty much the rest of the counties in Minnesota went for Jensen and his conservative principles but there just weren't enough popular votes in those rural counties to carry the general election.

Another example is the congressperson in my district, Democrat Betty McCollum. She has been in office since 2001. Before her it was Democrat Bruce Vento who was in office from 1977 until he died in 2000. Both McCollum and Vento were former public school teachers with strong union affiliation and support. Think about that for a moment. For over 45 years my congressional district has been represented by a dyed in the wool liberal Democrat and former public school teacher. The sad and ironic fact is that their policies are leading to significant crime and decay in the cities who support them the most. But like a good Minnesotan, I continue to vote in each and every election and for a candidate I'm 99% sure will not win. You could say all of those elections were memorable but not necessarily for the reason you might expect but, rather, for the level of frustration that occurs with each election.

What did you look forward to the most as a child?



I assume this week's question is asking what did I look forward to other than every meal that was ever put before me? Yes, I did like to eat as a kid and the local Dairy Queen in St. Anthony Village (which is still operating in the same location 60 plus years later) was my favorite place to go for ice cream treats. My particular favorites were the vanilla malt and the butterscotch sundaes. YUMMY!

There were three things I enjoyed doing and looked forward to very much when I was a child of about 8 to 11.

I enjoyed going to my Grandpa and Grandma Paquette's house on Victory Memorial Drive in Minneapolis. This would have been in the years before 1961 as I believe they sold that house in 1960. We usually went to their house about every 6 weeks for a supper of pork roast and beef roast. My grandma would make one of each along with sauerkraut and potatoes. I'm not sure why she

made both but the food was always great. There was something about that house that always made me feel especially comfortable and my Grandma and Grandpa Paquette were a lot of fun to be around. My Grandma Paquette lived to be 87 and I was closer to her than any of my other grandparents. To this day I still drive to their old neighborhood and go for a walk. I still get that down home feeling of comfort when I'm in the neighborhood.

I looked forward to going to Minnesota Gopher football games with my dad when I was young. My dad was able to secure tickets to, an average, 3 games a season. The games were always on Saturday afternoon at the old Memorial Stadium on the University campus. We would park the car about a half mile from the stadium and walk the rest of way. Our route took us down University Avenue and past all the Fraternities and Sororities. During game days they began to party early and their alcohol induced antics along University Avenue were (mostly) fun to watch. The Gophers were a top ten team in college football during the early 60's under the leadership of coach Murray Warmath. He coached the Gophers from 1954 until 1971 . Those are great memories.

I looked forward to going to "the lake". Our family did not have a cabin but would rent a place at a resort or a cabin from someone my folks knew for a couple of weeks every year. There were no TV's at the lake and you were lucky to get a radio station tuned in

to listen to. I enjoyed fishing and being around the water but it was at the lake that I discovered my love of reading. Perhaps I take after my mom in that regard. She was a true sun worshiper and would sit down by the lake reading her books for at least 4 hours a day. While I was never one to sit out in the Sun I, nevertheless, read 4 hours a day just enjoying the quiet and solitude of the cabin.

Finally, what child doesn't look forward to Christmas. I did for sure. I also looked forward to the Thanksgiving holiday and Easter.

I may be missing some things that I looked forward to. Childhood was a long time ago after all.....

Did you consider any other careers? How did you choose?



There was a time when I thought about becoming an attorney. I will speak to that and a few other opportunities in this writing. But first, a look back at the economy and job prospects for people graduating with a Bachelor's degree around my time.

I graduated from St. Thomas in May, 1973. The economy was not good. I did some research on the economy as it was in the mid 70's and will quote from some of my research:

"The recession of 1973-75 was the most severe economic contraction in the post WWII era. By the first quarter of 1975, real gross domestic national product had declined nearly 7% from its 1973 peak, about twice the decline in real GNP from peak to trough in 1957-1958, the most severe previous postwar recession." Additionally, the US was in the middle of the oil crisis hoisted on us by our "friends" in the Middle East. In other

words, things were a real mess and finding a decent job was very tough.

I interviewed for a few positions with large international companies in the spring of 1973. I recall my interviews with IBM and the old IDS- Investor's Diversified Services— which was acquired by American Express a number of years later. These were managerial trainee positions which each paid in the \$700 to \$750 per month range. At the time, I was making more driving a delivery truck (\$5.50 an hour) or about \$950 per month.

In the fall of 1972 , I took the Law School Admissions Test (the LSAT as it was known back then.) I did not do well on the exam. So my dream, as weak as it was, did not come to fruition. In fact, Connie and I had become engaged in the spring of 1973 and I knew I couldn't afford to go to law school for 3 years and expect Connie to support me. Just wasn't going to happen!

I didn't think long about taking a management trainee job with either of the big companies. Instead, I continued working for Abrams Meat Distributors doing manual labor and truck driving for the rest of 1973 making \$2 an hour more compared to the other jobs.

I set my sights on becoming a CPA the last semester of my senior year. As you can probably surmise the “decision” was reached because certain doors closed—like law school. However, I had always liked taxation as an academic subject and have written earlier about my tax instructor Dan Sevenich. I spent a fair

amount of time talking to my other accounting professors and they encouraged me to look at public accounting as a career. Unfortunately, it was too late for me to switch my subject matter concentration to accounting before graduation.

I needed to take 6 additional accounting classes (beyond the 4 I took in order to get my business marketing/ management degree) to be considered for hire by a CPA firm. I also needed a minimum number of accounting classes in order to qualify to sit for the Uniform CPA examination that was given twice a year. I believe I mentioned before in these writings that I went back to school during the summer and fall of 1973 (after graduation) and completed all the necessary accounting classes by the end of the year.

In the end, I think it was the right career path choice, even though I needed to take some additional classes. As good fortune would have it I landed a position with the “big eight” CPA firm Ernst & Ernst starting January 2, 1974. And the rest is history.....

Describe your “relationship with money” and has it changed over time?



This a question that I posed to myself.

My relationship with money is complicated. On the one hand I am by nature a saver and not a spender. I don't buy what I don't absolutely need, I don't dress in the most current fashion, I don't drink, gamble or smoke. I don't have any toys like boats or snowmobiles. I'm not a member of a country club. I don't spend money on hunting or fishing gear because I don't hunt or fish. I also don't have a lake home or a place in Florida. I own one car that is currently 9 years old with 142,000 miles on it and see no reason to get a new one. On the other hand, I have been very philanthropic over the years and have contributed, or as Connie likes to say, "given away" a significant amount of money to

many charities, family and friends. I have tried to donate at least 10% of our annual income every year and have mostly succeeded. I went on line and did some research around this topic and was not surprised to learn that a fair amount has been written about it. Most of the online information is about a functional vs dysfunctional approach to managing money and written to help those who habitually are short of money because of poor spending/money management habits. From that perspective I have a very functional, albeit boring, relationship with money.

However, as I said above, my relationship with money is more complicated. Those who know me well can attest that I am a fastidious financial planner both by nature as well as training. I have been a Certified Financial Planner(r) since 1999 and a CPA since 1976. I attend 40 plus hours of continuing professional education annually mostly in the tax and financial planning areas, and have done so for 49 years.

But let's get to the heart of the matter which is my nature. Quite frankly, and by my own admission, I am obsessed with money. The definition of obsession I am using is " an idea or thought that continually preoccupies or intrudes on a person's mind."

A little more background. My mother handled all the household finances and paid the bills every week. I learned later in my life that my mom and dad had a financial "issue" before they were married, which now explains why she handled all the finances. My mom, dad, uncle Jean and others were in a musical group

that did weekend performances for money. The agreement my mom and dad had was to save the money for after they were married. My dad was the “keeper” of their share of the money. After they were married my mom asked about the money and my dad admitted that he had spent all of it. That’s a tough way to start a marriage and I’m sure my mom was furious. She never again trusted him with the household finances or bill paying. She too was fastidious and meticulous when it came to the family budget —which of course she had to be. I know my memory of watching her manage the money on a tight budget effected me.

My sister Karen recently recounted a story about me. I was in my second year at St Thomas and so was about 19. I lived at home and commuted to school. Karen would have been about 11. She talked about her vivid memory of me laying in front of our little TV counting the money from my weekly paycheck and putting it into various categories. Car payment, gas, cigarettes (yes I smoked back then), and general spending money. She recalls that I did this all the way through college.

When Connie and I were first married, I was making \$900 a month. I continued to meticulously budget our income in the hopes of having a decent downpayment on a house in a few years. I have not stopped planning or meticulously budgeting, although I don’t lay in front of our TV and count out the cash from my paychecks anymore. Now I go sit at Hardee’s and have my favorite lunch, a roast beef sandwich, where I update our

short and long term cash flow estimates, our longer term larger expenses like real estate tax payments, contributions and insurance. I also monitor our investments daily.

It appears not all that much has changed over the years relative to my relationship with money. If anything, it may be worse than ever since, for all intents and purposes, we live on a fixed income. That's not to say I won't try to not worry about finances. But the fact is it appears that I am who I am.

What are your favorite plays?



I do have a favorite play. But before I tell you about it, there are a few other plays that I have enjoyed over the years that come to mind.

I enjoyed the play “Les Miserables” and think I have seen it at least twice, once in New York City and once here in Minnesota. The music is really great and the story is as well.

Another favorite of mine is “Phantom of the Opera”. I think I have seen that play twice as well. Again, the music is fantastic and the play is well written.

Over the years there have been many other plays that I have enjoyed. The first play I remember going to was “I Do I Do” with Robert Preston and Mary Martin. It was in 1967 or 1968 when the play came to Minneapolis. I was only 16 or so and went with a girlfriend and her parents. I have no idea why I was invited to go, but my guess is they had a couple of extra tickets they didn’t

want to go to waste. I remember it vividly because we were in about the fifth row from the front and the stage was above our heads. They were pretty good seats.

My favorite play is from a story first published on December 19, 1843. That would be “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens. I first saw “A Christmas Carol” on TV many years ago. There have been a number of movie versions made of this story but my favorite is the 1951 movie with Alastair Sim playing Ebenezer Scrooge. I have seen the play at the Guthrie Theater over the years at least 3 times as well. It usually plays there every year during the Christmas season.

The play resonates with me because it’s all about the redemption of the soul. The play is about Ebenezer Scrooge— a very successful and opportunistic businessman—going from a miserly and miserable person to one of joy and charity, literally overnight. Sim plays the role of Scrooge perfectly. I watch this movie every year a few days before Christmas. I think I’ve seen it at least 15 times.

Perhaps in some way I’m like Scrooge. Maybe we all are. I can certainly be miserly and have my share of miserable moments but there is also that side of me that has moments of pure joy and happiness. And as I have written before, I try to be philanthropic and charitable.

What was the neighborhood you grew up in like?



When I was a newborn we lived in north Minneapolis from 1951 to 1953. We had a small house which was probably built between 1910 and 1920. It was just off of Broadway Street on Thomas Avenue. I won't write much about that neighborhood since I was pretty small and don't remember much about it. However, my mom tells a story that when I was about 20 months old, I decided it would be a good idea to direct traffic on the corner of Broadway and Thomas. My guess is she let me out to play in our little backyard and I took a walk up to Broadway. She found out because a policeman brought me home and told her I was playing traffic cop in the middle of the intersection. From then on, when I went out to the backyard, I was firmly attached by a rope to the sandbox. And I saw pictures of that to prove it.....

My parents built our home in St. Anthony Village in 1953. My mom lived in that house until she passed away in 2015.

I have written a little in previous questions about growing up in “ the Village” as we called it. Now I will speak more to the demographics, the people and the culture.

In 1953 the post war building boom was in full swing after World War II. St. Anthony village is a first ring suburb just 3 blocks from the city of Minneapolis. We were considered a part of northeast Minneapolis and that was how I described where I lived when asked. There was a lot of construction in our neighborhood in the 1950's and into the 1960's. When we moved there in 1953 there was mostly open undeveloped land to the north of us that was all residential single family houses by 1965 or so.

The neighborhood was safe and clean. We didn't have many parks so we played a lot of baseball and touch football in the streets. Back then not everyone had cars and the traffic was pretty light so the streets and yards were our playgrounds. We were able to stay out until dark with little to no concern for our safety.

The Village was almost 100% Caucasian. We were a large mix of European nationalities, many WW II veterans, lots of kids and almost no crime. We shared the same values, had a strong work ethic and minded our own business (for the most part). There were no “wealthy” people to speak of . I would describe most of the families as upwardly mobile middle class. As a rule most

families had at least 2 kids and many had 7 kids, or more, like us.

There were a lot of Catholic families in my neighborhood, which was to be expected since St. Charles Catholic grade school was just a few blocks away. I would say we were almost 100% Christian (Catholics and Lutherans in the vast majority) given our German, Irish, Polish, French, Scandinavian and Italian heritages.

There were very few senior citizens that lived in the Village in the 50's and 60's. It was mostly growing families parented by younger adults. As a general rule we were very close with our neighbors. All of us kids knew each other regardless if we went to Catholic or public school. There seemed to be an unwritten and unspoken bond among the families near us. I suspect it may have been due to the many returning WW II veterans who lived there. Essentially, they were all brothers by virtue of having served their country and fought in the War together. Additionally, there were very few single parent families and the majority of the women did not work outside the home.

I've not thought that much about the neighborhood I grew up in until this week. The more I do think about it the more it strikes me what an idyllic place it was and how fortunate for me to have grow up there.

When did you get your first car?



My very first car was a 1960 Chevrolet Impala. It was the old family car. My dad bought it in 1962 and drove it until about 1967 when he bought a used 1965 Pontiac Bonneville.

I was able to use that car 100% as my own during my senior year in high school and the first year of college. Although my mom had a drivers license, she didn't drive very much. In fact she usually only drove once a week and that was to get her hair done at the "beauty parlor" about 4 blocks away.

I was responsible for the cost of gas, insurance and maintenance on the car. By today's standards, the car was pretty spartan. It did have power steering and brakes but those were about the only two "upgrade options" it had. It did have an AM radio-which didn't work.

I drove that car everywhere. It was big and roomy with a bench seat in both the front and back. It was a four door sedan

that, when we were younger kids, had enough room to fit the whole family.

In a strange way that car became my sanctuary. It was a place I could be alone with my own thoughts outside of the house.

The first car I actually bought was a 1965 Buick LaSabre. I bought it from a guy by the name of Gary Balego who I had worked with at Sandy's Drive-In. I bought the car in 1970 for \$700. I remember going to St. Anthony Village bank to get a loan for the \$700 and repaid it at \$44 a month over 18 months (which included the interest). I never missed or was late on a payment! I had to have my dad co-sign on the loan for me.....

The LaSabre was a 4 door sedan that was a brownish tan in color. It had factory air conditioning (which didn't work), power steering and breaks. Happily, the radio worked. It had major hail damage on the trunk of the car when I bought it that was never fixed. That's the reason I got the car as cheaply as I did. I drove that car the last three years of college and didn't buy another one until I got the job, post graduation, in public accounting.

As I look back those many years ago, it's not lost on me that I have actually been very fortunate to have had the use of the old family car and was able to buy the Buick for an affordable price. One more little Grace from God in my life that, here-to-for, has gone unnoticed.

What is your current experience in the Hospital and why are you there?



As I write the answer to this question, I am at United Hospital in St. Paul. I thought an answer to something contemporaneously happening in my life would be unusual and appropriate.

Today is Tuesday May 23, 2023.

Late Saturday evening, May 20, I had gone to bed with moderate discomfort in my left shoulder/ left upper back and most of my left arm. I was also feeling slightly uncomfortable (not “quite right”) and had some mild discomfort in my upper middle /right chest area.

Around 1:30am Sunday morning the pain in my shoulder and arm had not subsided even after I took 1000mg of acetaminophen. I finally fell asleep about 3:00am and when I

awoke about 7:00 the arm pain was gone but I still had some mild chest discomfort.

Our grandson, Sammy, had spent the night with Connie and me Sunday night and so we were engaged with him until about noon. About 2:00pm, I began to again have the shoulder pain down my left arm and had a little more chest discomfort. Of note, however, is that I had no shortness of breath, sweating, nausea, or dizziness. In any event, we made the decision with advise of my physician to go to the ER about 3:30pm on Sunday.

I had a slightly elevated heart enzyme—Troponin level- that was taken twice on Sunday. One reading was 54 and the other 57. These readings indicated that I possibly had something going on with the heart. All my other bloodwork results were normal. I was admitted to the hospital early Monday morning about 12:45am. Since then I have had a full lung CT and chest X-ray, a Contrast Echocardiogram , a Contrast Heart CT, numerous blood tests etc., etc. End of writing, Tuesday afternoon, May 23.

Today is Friday May 26.

I was discharged from the hospital on Wednesday, May 24. On Tuesday evening, I had an Angioplasty and a Stent placement procedure in my right coronary artery. The doctors had discovered a 99% blockage of the artery upon further testing.

So a little more about my experience in the hospital until I was discharged on Wednesday, early afternoon.

I was in a double room with a roommate the first two nights. The fellow next to me had hemorrhoids removed on Sunday. OUCH! Let's just say he was in no mood to talk which was just fine with me. He did, however, groan all night long in pain especially when he tried to move at all in his bed. He also set off the alarms about every half hour because he was getting unhooked from the machine's that were monitoring his blood pressure and heart rate. He also suffered, I believe, from some dementia. As a result, I was in the room when a nurse/staff person came in and administered a cognitive test prior to his being discharged. He was born in 1958 so that makes him "just" 65 years old. I must say he looked older. (By the way, there is NO SUCH THING AS PRIVACY when you have a hospital roommate.) The nurse explained the test to him and proceeded to go through a series of questions/ mental exercises. The last exercise was a short story and then 4 questions about the story.

Even though I had 2 nurses in the room with me, one being a very young trainee, I couldn't help but listen to the exercises and final story. I won't go into great detail, but in the story the woman was a stockbroker with 3 kids from Chicago with a very handsome husband. The first two questions were "what was her occupation and how many kids did she have." He was able to answer those. The third question was "what STATE did the lady live in." He was stumped. After a minute of excruciating silence and waiting for this guy to answer I couldn't take it anymore and

so whispered to my nurse trainee “Illinois”. The nurse administering the test laughed and asked the fellow if he had heard my answer. The nurse must have had bionic hearing. On her way out I asked her if I goofed up the test for her and she told me there was no way he was going to be able to answer that question. The good news, I guess, is that they let him go home.

On the third night I was doubled up with an 84 year old fellow who, from the minute he got into the room, WOULDN’T STOP TALKING. I told Connie this guy was her father on steroids. The funny thing is he was also of German heritage, had 12 brothers and sisters and is a good lifelong Catholic. Go figure. In the first half hour this guy gave me his whole life story including the fact that in 2014 he had quadruple heart bypass surgery and since then has had 12 or 13 Stents put in. (He couldn’t remember if it was 12 or 13). Additionally, he has leaky heart valves, severe angina on a daily basis witnessed by me, and was just diagnosed with some sort of blood cancer a few months ago. Oh, he also mentioned that he got the COVID in 2020 and was in the hospital for 6 weeks with that.— He said he damn near died but was ready to go (die) anyway.....

He would start out every conversation with “ Let me give you a little advice”. After a while I figured I should probably put on my listening ears since this guy was still alive, mentally sharp (at least they didn’t ask him what state Chicago was in) and still looked forward to life with all he had been through. Truth is he

was a nice old guy, loved to give advise and has lived a good, honest and hardworking life—or so he says.

I feel there should be some moral to this story. So here is mine:
There is no certainty when it comes to longevity. We are better off than some and worse off than others. And in the end the Good Lord controls it all. And I believe that's a good thing.

In my case, I think the Good Lord had a hand in my decision to seek medical care last Sunday afternoon.....

How did the Good Lord get your attention in the summer of 2023?



A little background as a prelude to my encounter with God.

It all started the evening of Saturday May 20, 2023. I wrote about that experience in a previous question here and therefore won't go into many of the specifics. Suffice it to say that my having an unstable angina myocardial infarction was definitely eye opening as was the 99% blockage in my right coronary artery. The good news is that the stent placement I had done appears to have solved the problem.

I was released from the hospital on May 23 and sent home with a cocktail of anti blood clotting drugs which is standard protocol when one has a stent placement. All seemed to be going well until the following Friday June 2. I noted what turned out to be intestinal internal bleeding and contacted my Doctor. (Over the years I have had a number of internal bleeding episodes. I have

had Endoscopies and colonoscopies and the "conclusion" was always an irritated lining of the stomach known as gastritis causing the bleeds) When this would happen I would go off the blood thinners and it would usually clear up in a few days. However, in this case my Doctor strongly urged me to go to the hospital and have it checked out. This bleed turned out to be the worst one I ever had. My hemoglobin number went from 15.1 to 6.3 in a matter of one week!

Upon arrival at the hospital I was triaged and a number of tests were run including a CT scan of my belly and lower intestine area. They discovered that I had a Neuroendocrine tumor in the small intestine, which had most likely been there for a number of years and was the cause of the intermittent bleeding. I stayed in the hospital for observation purposes and to rebalance my blood clotting drugs and had surgery the following week. The prognosis is good. While it turned out to be cancerous, it is a low grade tumor and does not appear to have spread into any of my other organs. Between the surgery and ongoing immunotherapy's this slow growing cancer should be held in check.

These Tumors are very rare and usually discovered by accident, as was mine. If not detected early the outcome is usually a bowel obstruction and emergency surgery etc. with a greater likelihood that it may have spread to other organs.

I had 12 days in the hospital to reflect on my life. I did a lot of praying and thinking about my remaining time on this earth and how to best serve the good Lord AND enjoy my life free of concerns about money or work. While I still have more thinking and praying to do on this subject, God certainly got my attention. Both the heart episode and now the Carcinoid tumor could have been catastrophic. It now appears that will not be the case and I hope to have a good many years of healthy living ahead of me.

I had always thought the answer to my prayers would have been by way of a light pat on the back or a soft whisper in the ear. Not a heart attack and a cancer diagnosis inside two weeks. I've never been able to take subtle hints and this certainly proves it. So now, on to the next chapter of my life.

How did the Good Lord get your further attention in the Summer of 2023?



In a previous question, I wrote about having a Stent put in my right coronary artery because of a significant blockage and then the discovery of a Neuroendocrine tumor in my small intestine which required major surgery and another 12 days in the hospital. Well, there's more to the story of a spiritual nature that occurred during the first week of my recovery time at home. But before I describe the event let me give you a little more "lay of the land" as to my spiritual self.

I have always considered myself a Catholic. I was born one and will die one. All of my 17 years in school were in Catholic schools. I have received all of the sacraments, except Holy Orders, at one time or another in my life. I have been very active in Catholic volunteer work over my lifetime. I have written about some of the items I was involved with in earlier questions. I have been a

reasonably faithful church/ Sunday Mass attender. However, I never believed myself to be an inflexible, hardcore Catholic. There were many periods of time in my life that I was not attending Mass as often as I should. From a family life perspective, Connie and I raised Tony and Christina in the Church and saw that they were baptized and confirmed in the Catholic faith. They were educated in Catholic schools. I'm happy that we were able to send them to Catholic schools and they have done well in their lives.

So what's the problem you might ask. Ever since I can remember, I have challenged my Faith. I have described it as not having enough faith, whatever that means. One would think you either have it or you don't. But for me it was as if I needed more Faith as, perhaps wrongly, I would perceive others with stronger Faith in God. My mother was a good example of that.

It seemed me that she was always lead by her belief in God and the holy precepts of the Church. I don't believe her faith ever wavered. I admired her for that and usually felt that I could never measure up to her. My aunt Marie and Uncle Jean were also people of incredible faith. I believe they both were daily Mass attenders after their retirements.

I have prayed one prayer over and over my whole life and it's the prayer that Jesus gave us: The Our Father. I have prayed it multiple times a day always focusing on the line "Thy kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." I have never

been certain that I am doing the Lord's Will. My prayer has always been for God to reveal His Will to me. I correlate that to my insecurity around not having enough faith and the cycle continues; not having enough faith and not knowing the Lord's Will.

So back to the week of June 19th. I was released from the hospital on June 14th and doing pretty well on my recovery. That is, until the evening of June 19th when I noticed that the surgery incision site was bleeding some and I was running a low grade fever. Those two items in tandem really threw me for a loop. Connie was still in France at the time and I was alone with my thoughts and insecurities. I finally reached a breaking point late in the evening where I knew the last thing I could handle was an infection and more hospitalization. My fervent prayer that night was in asking God to be with me and to give me strength and courage. I fell asleep around 1:00am and was woken up by a sharp frigid cold breeze on my face about an hour later. It's hard to describe, other than it was like walking into a freezer with a fan blowing freezing air in my face. However, I was also perspiring heavily, especially my head and neck area. As I was awoken, I turned my head to the right and saw a large figure—only for an instant— standing over me as if “on guard” to keep me safe. It's hard to describe the figure since it was more of a dark shadow but it seemed to be in the shape of a large man. I recall felling a sense of peace and serenity that I had never felt

before. I laid in bed for a few minutes reviewing in my mind what had just occurred. I finally got up and went into the bathroom. It was then that I noticed the bleeding had stopped in the incision area. I decided to take my temperature and it was back to normal. I have thought a lot about that night. The “dark shadow” I can only conclude was my Guardian Angel delivering a message from God that He has not forgotten me and, perhaps, He has more things in store for me over my remaining time on earth. And to be confident that He will reveal his Will to me as necessary and that I should not live in doubt of my Faith or that I am not following His will.

What is one of your earliest childhood memories?



I did a little research regarding at what age we begin to remember things from our childhood. The consensus among psychologists is that some of us remember things from as early as 2 to 4 years of age, while others go as long as 6 years of age. I think I am one of the early ones.

I have some very vague memories of our house on Thomas Avenue North in Minneapolis. I would have been just two years old because we moved to our home in St. Anthony Village in 1953. One memory is climbing the stairs to the second floor of that old house. I have a pretty vivid memory of that staircase. I also recall climbing on the cupboards in the kitchen looking for something to eat. Other than that I don't recall much.

My first memory of our house in the Village dates to the spring of 1954, I believe. I was sitting on our back steps watching the

bulldozer level the dirt in the backyard area prepping for sod to be laid. I can still see the bright sun shiny day and the bulldozer coming within inches of the steps I was sitting on. I recall the driver telling me not to move. The bulldozers back in those days were not as large or sophisticated as today. They had an open cab where the driver sat.

I remember a fair amount about going off to Kindergarten in early September of 1956. I was still 4 years old, not 5 until September 30. My sister Therese, who was in the second grade, walked me to school and deposited me at the door of the kindergarten classroom. I don't remember having any separation anxiety or problems being left alone in the classroom. Interestingly, kindergarten was half days back then. I was in the afternoon class. My memories of my time in kindergarten are very fond. I don't remember the Nun's name who was the teacher but the fact she was a Nun is interesting.

The classroom was a big room with its own toilet. We had a lot of kids in the class, most of whom I went all the way through to the 8th grade. It was here that I met my lifelong friend Mark Murlowski—almost 67 years ago!

A final memory I'll share is going to the "drive in" outdoor movies back in the later 1950's. Usually it would be me, Therese and Nancy in the back seat of the old 1951 Chevy Impala. We would get dressed in our pajamas and just my dad would take us. Mom always stayed home. She probably needed time to

recuperate from us kids. I don't remember much about the shows and I don't think we ever stayed awake to the end since they were usually not over until after 11:00pm. But, for whatever reason, it's one of the memories I've had these many years.

How did you celebrate your 21st birthday?



I have no recollection of any 21st birthday “celebration “. My 21st birthday was on September 30, 1972. At that time, I was a first semester senior at the University of St. Thomas and totally focused on my studies and working nights at Abrams Meat Distributors. I did look up what day of the week September 30, 1972 was and it fell on a Saturday-so we must have done something. I just can’t recall what.

I do have a vivid recollection of my 27th birthday. Somehow that birthday just sticks with me, perhaps because I had a significant pulmonary embolism a couple of years earlier and my left leg was still very painful and was still recovering from that whole episode. Add to that Tony was born 12/28/77 and so I was a relatively new father on September 30, 1978. Finally, I had changed jobs and was working as an audit supervisor for KPMG. So, all in all, there were a number of “life event changes“ that I

was getting myself used to.

Connie and I celebrated my 27th birthday by going out to dinner with John and Linda Schroepfer. We went to a restaurant in northeast Minneapolis by the name of Arthur's. They were famous for their giant onion rings and prime rib. I recall that we got a large basket of the onion rings and I ordered an end-cut prime rib for dinner. My guess is that it was at least 30 ounces of beef. It seems like it was yesterday. During the evening's conversation, I told everyone that for some reason, this birthday was my most significant and that I felt "old" for the first time in my life. As I look back, I was obviously not old and probably just feeling all the changes that had occurred over the past few years. That dinner was 45 years ago. Hard to believe. That's all I can say about birthday celebrations in my under 30 year old age range.

I have had other birthday celebrations that I remember fondly. My 40th was the most memorable, thanks to Connie and her wonderful planning, of an evening by boat on Lake Minnetonka with about 35 friends and relatives.

That's pretty much it for birthday memories, or the lack thereof.....

What were your thoughts as you approached retirement in June of 2023?



I “officially” retired from Boyum Barescheer as of June 30, 2023. As a farewell, I attended the Firm’s July executive committee meeting and we had a little celebration at the end of the meeting. It was nice because it was no big deal.....I’ve had many thoughts leading up to retirement and some of the fonder ones are reminiscing about my very early career days. As I was driving to the meeting, and knowing it would be my final one, I thought back to January 2, 1974 and my first day at Ernst & Ernst.

I was hired in the fall of 1973 but didn’t start until January. I was still living at home and the drive was a short one to downtown Minneapolis from St. Anthony Village. Back then, proper

business attire was suits and ties. Occasionally, you could wear a sport coat with a tie but only if it was acceptable attire at the client's offices. So I was dressed up in a new suit not really knowing what to expect.

The first week on the job was dedicated to orientation and training. It was held off site at the Normandy Hotel. I fact checked myself on this and confirmed that January 2, 1974 was -30 below air temperature with a lot of wind to boot. Back then they didn't calculate wind chill but let me tell you IT WAS COLD. One doesn't forget days that cold. I remember going out to the parking lot and starting my car at lunchtime. I'm glad I did. Many cars that sat for the 9-10 hours didn't start after the meeting.

Ernst & Ernst had an aging manager who was the head of HR by the name of Len Dickenson. He ran the orientation the first day. About all I remember from that first day were the two big rules that we were not to break. The first was don't leave the clients payroll information out in the open. Apparently, there had been a few instances where the payroll information had been left out and the client's janitorial crew got a hold of it while they were cleaning after hours. By morning just about everyone knew what everyone else was being paid. The second rule was don't date or inappropriately fraternize with the client personnel. The penalty for both of these offenses was immediate dismissal. There were no "appeals" back in those days.

The final story is about the first audit I was on. It was my second week at the firm and I was assigned a client in St. Cloud, MN. I drove to St. Cloud early on a Monday morning and met the E & E supervisor, Irv Zinter and the In Charge, Jeff Tidrick. I liked both Irv and Jeff. We were auditing a subsidiary of a Company headquartered in Cleveland. I walked into the client's office and there had to be 100 women in a large bullpen type of room adding numbers on old Victor electric adding machines. (There were no computers in those days.) Everything was done manually. These ladies could work those machines adding numbers like it was nobody's business. I was told to sit at a desk in the rear of the room. That is until I started hunting and pecking on a client supplied 10 key adding machine. As soon as Irv saw me doing this he told me to sit in his office. He gave me a phone book and told me to start adding up the telephone numbers. In other words, figure out how to get faster on the 10 key machine. By the way, did I say that I had no idea what I was doing? Later that evening the three of us went to dinner—we stayed overnight in a motel. There was a really good pizza place nearby and we went there for dinner. We all ordered our own pizzas. I was starving. Both Irv and Jeff got their pizzas in about 20 minutes but mine never came. The other two let me have some of theirs since there was plenty. Clearly, my first real day on the job wasn't the greatest. At the end of the meal Irv told me to put \$7 on my expense report even though I didn't get any

meal.....I think he felt sorry for me. I was happy to get the \$7.

How would you describe your politics?



From a political standpoint, I lean right. I do not belong to any political party and never have.

I would describe myself as a moderate conservative. I believe we have a bloated government and too many programs that can be taken advantage of by the able bodied.

I grew up in a time when social welfare programs were there for the most needy. This was a time when most people did not want to be on welfare and (right or wrong) there was a social stigma associated with it. I believe in taking care of the most vulnerable among us but not people that make poor life choices and expect society to fund them. My guess is that most rational people would agree with me on that.

I'm not sure if I'm necessarily describing my politics but rather how I look at the role of society in helping those that want to help themselves.....Enough said.

What inventions have had the biggest impact on your day-to-day life?



I really like this question. As I was thinking about it, though, I wondered if the question is more narrow as in “What inventions in your lifetime had the biggest impact on your day-to-day life?” I decided to modify the question as originally posed and use a broader definition to include things that were invented before I was born as well.

A few items come to mind. The invention of the combustible engine and the birth of the automobile, the discovery and ability to harness the power of electricity, indoor plumbing, the computer, the internet and the wireless phones and other devices. Those all have had a huge impact on my daily life.

As I think of the impact on my life, the benefits of the inventions above are pretty obvious. What would our life be without electricity or indoor plumbing. All we need to do is think about

those times when the electricity went out for an hour to know the impact; or think about having to find a water source and carry it into the house every day if we had no running water. And how about the luxury of an indoor bathroom. The automobile made obsolete the horse and buggy and sped up daily travel. It allowed suburbs to sprout up around cities and those residents to commute by car to work. The internet and wireless age has allowed us to be in constant communication and never “disconnected”. The ability of so many people now to work from home is the result of this technology.

But what about the negatives that are associated with these great inventions. For me, I have real life experience of life before the internet, computers and wireless devices. From my experience and observation, never being “disconnected” is not necessarily a great thing. I’ve watched our new hires at the firm and their obsession with their wireless phones. Sitting at their desk they have their heads down checking their phones for new texts. This while they are trying to work on client information. So much for “giving it your all”. I can’t imagine working and constantly being distracted and interrupted by the cell phone on the desk. The art of personal face to face and in person communications is taking a big back seat to the impersonal world of the text, face book, twitter and all other social media.

We have some people at the firm whose development has been stunted in their careers because they prefer “a 100% work from

home“ program. Certainly, working from home has its benefits for the individual. But again, what about the distractions that go along with working from home. Another concern is the lack of in office professional interaction with their peers and the growth that goes along with that.

I can't talk about inventions that have effected my daily life without commenting on the advances in medical science. Specifically, the drugs that I have needed to help me with my blood clotting disorder- Factor V Leiden. Both heparin and warfarin are blood anticoagulants that I have taken. Without those there is a good chance I would not have lived past the age of 25.

I'm sure there are other inventions I could mention but I think the items above are the most important.....

What was your Mom like when you were a child?



Elaine Marie (Torborg) Paquette was born in January 1926. She grew up in northeast Minneapolis, went to St. Boniface Catholic grade school and St. Anthony of Padua Catholic high school graduating in 1943—during the middle of World War II. Both schools were within 4 blocks of her home. She never attended college.

My mom was a very attractive woman. A rumor had it, probably started by her, that she received 6 marriage proposals before the age of 21. (I suspect most of these were from fellows going off to war and wanting to make her their “war bride”.)

My mom and dad were married in May, 1948. They were both 22 years old. Back then, 22 was not necessarily considered young to get married, especially after the war. But I think 22 is pretty young. I was married at that age and know that “kids” in their early 20’s are short on life and relationship experience and have

a lot of growing up to do.

Anyway, on to the question of what my mom was like when I was a child. She was a very good mother and did a wonderful job of raising us kids, running the household, keeping discipline and living her Catholic faith. She was a disciplined and Faith filled person herself. Thankfully, other than smoking, she didn't have any other bad habits— most notably NOT drinking.

I can't imagine how difficult it must have been raising 7 children in a small house. She managed it well because she was disciplined and developed routines that each one of us kids followed. We all had our weekend chores and we all did them without too much complaining. If I recall, once we were in about the third grade, we had our weekend cleaning duties pretty well established.

Our household was a happy one for the most part. I believe my mom and dad really loved and accepted each other, in spite of their failings. I know they loved each one of us kids.

I attribute something else to my mother. She was always at home. She did not go out except for her one day a week to the Beauty Parlor. Her consistency and stability provided for a very secure and reliable household, which I believe to be so important for raising a family. I just took for granted that my mom would always be there when I got home from school or playing outside. My mom had her down moments like all of us do at times. But like many good Catholic women of her day, she relied on her

Faith and the Good Lord to provide her the support and comfort she needed. She also had a large support base of sisters to help her when needed.

I had a very good upbringing; physically, mentally and spiritually thanks in large part to my mom and her guidance.

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



I looked up the word “famous” for a good definition and came up with two descriptions : “A celebrity who receives much acclaim and attention. Or, a person whose actions and opinions strongly influence the course of current events.”

Given that definition, I haven’t met too many famous people. However, there have been a few.

A number of years ago MCI, Connie’s employer, used to sponsor a professional golf tournament and other types of events for customer marketing purposes. I did meet some professional golfers at those events but, honestly, I wouldn’t consider them all that famous. There was one event that I recall that I attended with Connie that included some Hollywood entertainment celebrities. Among then were Barbara Eden, Peter Graves and Jack Carter. Mr. Carter was a comedian and the evening’s

entertainment. I actually had a conversation with him since he sat at our table. I noticed that when the food was being served he asked the waitress to hold his dinner until after he was done performing. I asked him about that and he said he has never been able to eat before going on stage. He didn't like the feeling of a full stomach when performing. Coincidentally, when I was teaching—way back when- I had the same issue. We spoke about that and other peculiarities we had before “going on stage” for probably ten minutes. It was a fun conversation. He was a very gracious guy and a very funny comedian.

I consider Archbishops to be in the latter definition of “famous” above in that they influence the course of current Catholic and in some cases societal events. This is certainly true when you look at the churches teachings on birth control and social justice.

The two Archbishops I have known the best are Archbishop Harry Flynn, who is now deceased, and our current Archbishop Bernard Hebda. As a member of the Archdiocese Finance Council in the late 1990's and the early 2000's I got to know and interact with Archbishop Flynn. I had great respect for him and always marveled at his pastoral common sense and humility.

I also have great respect for Archbishop Hebda who came to this Archdiocese at a very difficult time and shepherded us through the priest abuse scandal and the bankruptcy. I have had the honor of working with a number of Archdiocesan related entities and on some commissions of the Archdiocese.

Archbishop Hebda is one of the most humble people I have ever met. He is also one of the most brilliant people I have met. I have yet to meet a person who does not have great respect for, and trust in, Archbishop Hebda. He knows that he has the power to influence current events and he does so, but only after careful consideration and much prayer. His example is an inspiration to me and, I believe, the vast majority of those people he touches.

What is the best meal you've ever had?



The best meal I ever had has much more to do with the people I shared it with, than the food I ate. I will talk a little here about my best meal experiences both as they relate to the food eaten and the company I was with.

Thanksgiving dinner is always one of my favorite meals. For many years now, I have prepared the turkey and dressing. Most years the food was very good. However, the most enjoyable part of Thanksgiving has always been the preparation that starts with shopping for the dressing ingredients (including the Italian sausage) and the turkey with Christina. We have developed a tradition of sorts in our family around celebrating Thanksgiving. Many people who know me know that Thanksgiving is my favorite non religious holiday because it is simple and centered on a good meal with family and friends.

When Connie and I were first married and the kids were young we would have frequent cookouts with John and Linda Schroepfer and their young kids. These were back in the days when we didn't have an abundance of money and we simply enjoyed the food (family steak, ribs and chicken wings were always winners), some cheap wine and good company. We would give the kids baths at whoever's house we were at after supper and put the kids to bed. Then we adults could just relax and have a nice conversation. I think we started getting together with John and Linda in the late 1970's doing these cookouts.

My recounting of favorite meals wouldn't be complete without talking about the first Christmas Day meal I had at Connie's mom and dad's house. It was the very first Christmas we were dating— 1972. We had just started dating that late fall and we went to Midnight Mass at the Cathedral. She invited me over for Christmas Day dinner with her mom, dad, grandma and grandpa. I'm not sure if Dick and Bea Pedderson were there but they may have been. I was completely unaware of the meal "protocol" as lived and enjoyed by an Italian family. I thought I was going over there to have a nice spaghetti dinner with a few meatballs. What I didn't know is that the pasta course was only the first course of the meal. The pasta course came not only with meatballs but also sausage, a roast beef and pepperoni all cooked in the sauce. It was delicious and I ate a TON. I was shocked when Mary Jane brought out a huge salad a few minutes later which I found out

was only the second course. This was followed by the meat course which, in this case, was a roast loin of pork. We also had orange slices soaked in anisette after the meal to have something sweet.....The last course was desert.....

I don't think I have ever been so full in my life. I must have eaten a pound of spaghetti along with a total of 6 meatballs, sausage, some roast beef and pepperoni in that first course alone. I recall Mary Jane (who even back then never sat down at the table) cheering me on during that first course. She was very pleased that I loved her sauce. (It turns out that Connie had a few "suitors" before me over the years who actually didn't like her spaghetti. Can you believe that?) Luckily for me, one of the other protocols is that these meals should be eaten and enjoyed at your leisure, say at least three hours so. The only reason I survived is because I was able to give it a rest between courses. I'm pretty sure my gastronomical performance that day cemented me as a qualified suitor for Connie. And as they say, the rest is history.

If you could thank anyone, who would you thank and why?



This is an interesting question. There are many people I owe a debt of gratitude. I've thought about my approach to this answer and decided to answer it in a numerical format in no particular order of priority.

1. I'm not sure I ever thanked my parents for raising me with a pretty good conscience and knowing right from wrong. When I see, what appears to me at least, the senseless actions of violence, mayhem and theft committed by so many juveniles and younger adults I can only surmise that they don't have a well formed conscience. I believe the blame lies with their parents or whatever primary guardian they had in their early formation years.
2. I owe a debt of gratitude to my grade school teachers at St. Charles Borromeo school. Back in those days there was very little

involvement of the parents in their child's education. At least, that was true for me. Outside of school I was pretty much on my own to learn the material that was being covered in class. While we had a lot of kids in each classroom, it seemed our teachers new what each one of us was capable of from a learning standpoint and I don't think anyone of us felt ignored or slighted.

3. I owe a number of my instructors at St. Thomas College a thank you. I've written about some of them in this book, particularly Dan Sevenich and Dr. Fred Flynn. I'm not necessarily sure the thank you is for making me a great scholar, but rather helping to give me the confidence I needed to be successful in their classrooms. I learned if you have the confidence then through hard work and study you can master the material.

4. I owe a big thank you to the companies that hired me, while I was in college, to work either during the summers or the school year. I had no choice but to work while I was in school since I funded all the costs. I was very fortunate to find the right kind of jobs that paid well and I could fit into my school schedule. I worked very hard those four years I was in college both in the classroom and at my jobs. I didn't have a lot of free time and did not participate, at all, in any school extra curricular activities. I don't think I ever went to a St. Thomas basketball or football game the four years I was there. In fact, I remember during the football season I would be about the only person in the library on

Saturday afternoons.

5. I owe a debt of gratitude to Len Dickenson of Ernst & Ernst. He was the hiring manager who offered me the job with them after I graduated. That was the first big break in my professional career and sent me down the path of getting my CPA Certificate. Being an auditor in a large international firm gave me a lot of exposure to other companies and how they operated. It was a great experience and I learned a lot in a short period of time.

6. I would have liked to give my Aunt Marie more thank you's. She was my second mother. I did have a chance to write her a thank you note at the end of her life and, I believe, it meant a lot to her.

There are others, I'm sure, that I owe a debt of gratitude.....but this is what I have for now.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?



This is a tough question to answer. I know it is because, like with all tougher questions, when I find it difficult to know where to start then it is definitely a tough question.

For this question I started by looking up the “definition” of happiness. As you might expect there are many answers since, I suspect, happiness is different for each individual person.

Most of the answers about being happy had some element of “contentment” in their answer. Contentment with their job, personal relationships, amount of money they had and their spiritual life to name a few areas. I would agree that contentment is a major force in being happy but I’m just not sure it’s the be all and end all for me.

Another element of happiness is the ability to live in relative harmony in all facets of your life. In my case, I seek to live in harmony with all that is around me; things of this world and not

of this world. A definition I stumbled onto for “living in harmony“ is: living together peacefully rather than fighting or arguing. A pretty simple definition but if you really think about it the ability to interact peacefully whether at home, at play or at work would seem to be another key element of happiness. How could a rational person be happy if they were always fighting and arguing?

Another element of happiness for me is being grateful for what I have, both physically and spiritually. I have seldom felt that I “deserve” more or I should have been given more than I have. I have been given the opportunities to be successful in my life and I am grateful that I was able to take advantage of many of them. Sure, it’s one thing to be given an opportunity and another to work hard enough to take advantage of it. But that’s what successful people do. I have also been blessed by the Good Lord in many ways. A solid spiritual foundation from my parents and a family that loves me to name a few. Perhaps I had it easy in my life and, if that be the case, then I’m grateful for that.

A quick recap of my answer to the question of perfect happiness. I’m not sure I know what perfect happiness would be in this life. The only perfect happiness I can imagine (and hope for) would be in the next life when I am finally able to see the face of God. The closest I can come to perfect happiness in this life is in the deep and profound contentment that comes from knowing that we are never alone. God is always with us.

What are some of your childhood memories of your father?



I have many childhood memories of my father. Some good and some not so good. I will attempt to balance my comments and give you an honest answer. I hope I don't upset too many of the future readers (like my siblings perhaps) of this story in the process.

Unfortunately, I believe the memories of my dad are heavily influenced by my view of his drinking. I have many early memories of him coming home from work under the influence of alcohol. I also have vivid memories of my mom being extremely upset with him when he did this. My estimate is that he came home that way at least once a week. I think I became aware of his drinking habit at about the age of 7 or 8. It was at that age I began to understand my mom's anger and the reason that he behaved "differently". I am not in any way implying that my dad

was abusive to my mom or us kids because I am not aware of any such behavior.

I really believe that my dad felt a lot of pressure as the father of 7 kids. I can't imagine having to be the sole supporter of a wife and 7 young children.....

I could never quite figure my dad out and I never felt like he and I had a very close relationship. I remember my dad as a fellow who did not talk much about his feelings, at least not with me. He was also not one to show his feelings. I don't fault him for this since I believe he was raised the same way and that was the "way it was" back then. I know my dad went to Mass every Sunday, but beyond that I know very little about his spiritual thoughts and life. I think he believed in God but we never had any in depth discussions about our faith or catholicity that I can recall. My mom, on the other hand, did a fair amount of talking about her feelings and faith.

My dad was not one to be involved in charitable activities or coaching sports teams. I do know that he made a big attempt to watch me play baseball when I was on the grade school and high school teams but he was never actively involved.

My dad was a fairly avid sports fan. He particularly liked baseball and football. I don't recall that he had much interest in any other sports. My dad and I went to a number of Gopher and Viking football games. Those are good memories that go back to when I was 7 or 8 years old. We're talking the late 1950's!

Another memory of my dad were the times that my mom would force him to go on a diet. He was a good size guy, 6 feet tall and probably 230 pounds. It seemed she was always on him to lose “a little” weight especially because she was a lifetime member of Weight Watchers. But the real memory around these diets were our clandestine trips to the local Tom Thumb convenience store late at night where my dad would buy a few nut goody candy bars that we would eat on the way home. That was always a special treat.

As I said at the beginning of this answer, I have good and some not so good memories of my dad. As a father, I feel he did as good a job as he could given the times and circumstance. While we were never that close we were also never estranged. I would have liked to know him better and, possibly, I would have had he lived a longer life. He died at the age of 60 of Colon Cancer.

How is life different today compared to when you were a child?



Life was much simpler when I was a child. Television was just getting off the ground and not everyone had one until the late 1950's. There was no such thing as "social media" and most people relied on the radio and the daily newspaper to stay informed on current events. Organized sports for kids, when I was little, was just a fraction of what it is now. The kids in the neighborhood usually got together "spontaneously" for a pickup game of baseball or touch football almost every night during the summer and fall.

Neighborhoods and schools were safer when I was a child. At least mine were. This was due mostly to two parent families that did a good job keeping their kids in line and being vigilant for unusual activity.

As a general rule, we had more respect for authority. This included our teachers and police as well as other parents. I don't ever remember being concerned for my safety when I was out and about in St. Anthony Village or in school.

Most of the families where I grew up were two parent families where the majority of the mom's were stay at home. There was almost always an adult at home during the day in each of our homes in the neighborhood. We also knew everyone in the neighborhood which, if you think about it, was one of the biggest reasons our neighborhood was so safe.

We rode our bikes or walked wherever we went. It was very rare that our parents would give us a ride to a "play date", or even to school. (I'm pretty sure we didn't have anything that we called play dates back then).

Our school didn't have school buses. Pretty much everyone walked or rode their bike. I ate my lunches at home so I walked to and from school twice daily. I estimate that we were about 4/10 of a mile from the school, so I walked about 1.6 miles each day.

Most of the families in the neighborhood ate their evening meals together. I remember our evening meals with fondness. Our meals were an orderly affair. Dinner was on the table at 5:15pm and we were all wrapped up by 6:00, including washing, drying and putting all the dishes away. We didn't have a dishwasher until 1965. It was pretty much Therese, me , Nancy and Margaret

during the early years doing all the dishes. I don't remember my dad participating in that particular after dinner activity.

I lived in a neighborhood with a lot of Catholics. My estimate is that at least 80% of Catholic families went to Sunday Mass together. Unlike today, the majority of Catholic Kindergarten to Eighth grade age children went to the local Catholic grade school. I would say that our daily lives were more influenced by our Catholic faith than today. The other thing about the majority of the kids in Catholic school is that we were all educated and "formed" the same. There was very little misunderstanding when it came to right and wrong, good and bad. We all played by the same rules and they were strictly enforced. It may not have always been "politically" correct, but we all knew the rules and we're expected to follow them, and almost all of us did.

What is your best advice for raising children?



My best advice is to love your children unconditionally. There has been a lot written about unconditional love as this “concept” has been around a long time. I will attempt to give you my understanding of it and how I tried to put it into practice.

Let me start, though, by saying I was raised at a time when “unconditional love” was not clearly understood or necessarily practiced by parents. Many parents then could be long on criticism and short on praise. This is not to blame them but rather recognize that this is the way it was. Later in my life, my mom came around to understanding the concept and letting each of her children know that she loved them. I think we always knew it to be true but it never hurts to hear the words. My dad was pretty old school and was fairly unemotional as it related to us kids. He didn’t show much outwardly “love” but I always believed his actions spoke louder than words. Every day he went

to work to put food on the table as his way of saying I love you.

Connie and I had the luxury of being married for 3 1/2 years before Tony was born and over 8 years for Christina. I had spent a fair amount of time thinking about what type of parent I wanted to be. I had a pretty good idea of what type of parent I didn't want to be and spent considerable time thinking on that as well.

But back to unconditional love. Here are some characteristics of what I consider it to be:

1. A meaningful and steady presence in the home and in the life of the child is first and foremost. Absentee parenting, in my opinion, just doesn't cut it. Each child is different and I believe that the parent needs to know their child individually and what type of unconditional love they need. Some kids need more verbal affirmation of their parents love than others. Still others may need more tactile affection like hugging, and not just when they are younger. To this day, I still feel it's important to let both my kids, and my grandkids, know verbally and demonstrably that they are loved.

2. Unconditional love can mean tough love at times. Every child makes mistakes and needs "course correction" during their life. A parent who is involved and present in their child's lives usually knows, or can sense, when a course correction is needed. And it takes courage on the part of the parent to guide the child to the right path.

3. I believe another aspect of unconditional love is accepting the child where “they are at“. Meaning, the knowledge of what their child’s abilities are and, perhaps more importantly, what they are not. Some parents have the luxury and can afford to expose their kids to many types of activities to help them determine their likes and dislikes. I think Connie and I were fortunate in that regard and Connie, many times, took the lead in getting Tony and Christina involved in things I never would have. (Maybe Christina remembers the singing and dance activities that mom got her into.)

4. The last bit of advice I can give is to work with each child on a well formed conscience and a spiritual base that they can grow upon. I believe they go hand in hand. I’m not necessarily talking about raising each child as Catholic, although that is my preference and upbringing. I believe the recognition of a higher power and the intrinsic knowledge and practice of right and wrong are extremely important in both the well being and upbringing of a child. Think of today’s society and the number of carjackings by our youth that would not occur if those kids had a well formed conscience, the knowledge of right and wrong and the desire to act accordingly. That ALL starts at home with parents who love you unconditionally .

How would you describe the experience of writing the answers to the Storyworth questions this past year?



I was a little apprehensive at the start of writing this 52 week Storyworth book. I wasn't sure that I would have the discipline to write something substantial every week for a year. However, there were some things I learned along the way that I think are worth sharing.

Some of the questions could have been answered with simple yes or no answers. Obviously, yes or no answers aren't in the spirit of writing one's memoirs by way of answering the questions. I was able to take most of the questions and with a little (or a lot) of thought was able to add enough substance around the answer to give it some context and "flavor".

Some of the questions overlapped others and I ended up repeating myself in a few of the answers. I wanted each answer to stand on its own and so when I did repeat myself it was mostly intentional.

I was/am constantly mindful that what I write will, in all probability, be passed down from generation to generation. At least I hope it is. Because of this, I tried to be as careful as possible with my characterizations, opinions and judgements especially because much of what I wrote about occurred many years ago. If I seemed overly critical of a person or circumstance, that was not my intention. Rather, I hoped to give an honest and open answer to each of the questions I answered.

My memory of things from years ago is not flawless. There were a number of occasions that I would “fact check” myself by running items past my siblings. In some cases my memories were fairly accurate as remembered by my siblings and other times not. When memories differed I did try to correct my thoughts and answers.

As it turns out, writing this memoir was more a labor of love than not. I found that when I wrote, more often than not, I became engrossed in what I was doing and time would fly by. There were very few times that I was unable to finish the weeks writing in more three sessions. As the weeks went by I also found that the more time I gave to thinking up front about what I wanted to say-rather than to just start writing- the better off I

was. I now give the “little gray cells” of my brain a good three days to work on and formulate the answer to the week’s question before I write any words.

What job(s) did you have when you were in high school?



The story of my “work history” during my high school years has a few twists and turns that I will share with you. I also learned some valuable life lessons during this period.

For starters, it should be stated up front that my high school years were the least focused years of my life. I have written in other answers about some of the issues I had during that period and may repeat myself a little here.

My first job was dishwashing at the local Perkins Pancake house. I was hired October 1, 1966 the day after I turned 15 years old. If I recall, one needed to be 15 in order to work past a certain time of night. I was paid a starting wage of \$1 an hour. I think I got a 5 cent raise after 90 days on the job. Most of the hours I worked were on Saturdays and Sundays. I remember the Sundays the best because I needed to be at work at 6:00am which meant I was

out of bed at 5:00. The restaurant was about a half mile from my house. I always walked to work.

I recall working pretty hard as a dishwasher, especially when you consider that I made \$8 for a full days work! To put that into perspective however, I think a pack of cigarettes back then was about 30 cents and a gallon of gas about the same. A pizza cost about a dollar.

I was “promoted” to Cook after about 6 months and enjoyed that work. It was certainly better than being a dishwasher.

I stayed at Perkins for about a year. I quit in the fall of 1967 to play football ant De La Salle. After football season, I went to work at Sandy’s (like a McDonalds) which was about 1 block from Perkins. I was paid \$1.25 if my memory serves me correctly and I was able to get more hours to work. I usually worked a couple of week nights and either a Friday or Saturday night, or both. We were open until 10:00pm on weekdays and 1:00am on weekends. If I was part of the “closing crew” I would end up working until 11:30pm on the week nights and 2:00am on week ends. Denny Felicetta was the assistant manager when I was at Sandy’s. We became fast , and lifetime, friends. There were many week day nights that he and I would go out for coffee after closing and I wouldn’t get home until 2:00 or 3:00am. (I was a junior in high school!) That made getting up and going to school at 7:00am pretty tough and I ended up sleeping through many of my classes.

One of the “lead” men at Sandy’s wasn’t a particular friend of mine. I’ll call him BB. I think he liked to smoke marijuana, and often. He was a couple years older than me and a real jerk. Well he decided one night, right out of the blue, to fire me. But he told me I had to work the rest of the shift because we were short staffed! What a dope. I was about 6 inches taller than him and weighed at least 50 pounds more. Let’s just say that he was a little nervous after he “fired me” the rest of the night.

So here’s what I did. When I went on break a few hours later, I called Denny at home and told him what had happened. He said “put BB on the phone”. That call lasted about 1 minute and BB gave me the phone back. Denny rehired me.....

My last job in high school (and by far the least memorable) was when I was hired as a lead man at the brand new Sandy’s on the University of Minnesota campus. I think it was the fall of 1968. I worked there until the end of the school year – May of 1969. That was probably the worst job I ever had. I didn’t like the U of M campus and didn’t particularly care for my co-workers. Most of them were college age kids and they probably didn’t like taking direction from a senior in high school. I didn’t help the situation much because I had a lousy attitude.

I learned at least one huge and valuable lesson during that 2 1/2 year period from October 1966 to May 1969. And as I reflect back, I admit my high school years were misspent. Instead of concentrating on my studies and being involved in school

activities, I worked too much to the detriment of my emotional, academic and spiritual development, and well being . I can assign some of the blame to my parents but, in the end, I was at fault. I knew at the end of my high school years that if I was ever going to be successful, I needed to “buck it up” myself because NOBODY was going to do it for me.

Luckily, I learned that lesson well. I got a job the day after I graduated from high school working full time from 3:00pm to 11:00pm at a grain mill and was able to pay for most of my first year college tuition with those summer earnings. I didn't miss any time that summer from my job. Yes, it was very hard work and I pretty much sacrificed that summer to focus on work. But it's what I needed to do. That fall, with the start of my matriculation at St. Thomas , I was able to do limited part time work (maybe 10- 15 hours a week) at a convenience store and really concentrate on my studies. I ended up with 2 A's a B and a C in the 4 courses (a full time student load) I took, earning a 3.25 grade point average that first semester.

I also learned what to do and not do as a future father based on my high school experience. When Tony and Christina went to high school we had a basic agreement that Connie and I would provide all the financial resources and parental support for them and they, in turn, would focus on their studies and participate in other school activities. They did a great job and, I believe, they will both tell you that they had an outstanding high school

experience.

How would you describe your childhood bedroom?



My first memory of my childhood bedroom was after we moved to our new home in St. Anthony Village in 1953. I was 2 years old. We had a small two bedroom house with a very small den. Initially, I shared a bedroom with Therese and also Nancy when she was born in September of 1954.

The bedroom that I shared was a square room with one window. We had single beds, each against a wall across from each other, and a six drawer horizontal dresser between the beds against another wall. My guess is that the room was maybe 150 sq. ft. The closet was about 4 feet long and 3 feet deep with a sliding door. There was just enough room to fit a small crib between the bedroom door and the closet. That's where Nancy slept as an infant.

Margaret was born in March of 1956 when Nancy was about 18 months old. If my memory serves me right, that's when I began

sleeping in the den. Margaret would have been in the crib and Nancy took my bed.

The den was actually a walk through space at the back of the house between the kitchen and the small bedroom. I estimate the size of the den to be a little smaller than the kids bedroom. During the day, the den had our one TV set in it and that's where the family watched TV after supper. When it was time for me to go to bed, I would move the TV (It was a small TV with maybe a 19 inch screen. It sat on a movable TV stand) into the living room where my mom and dad would watch TV after we were all were in bed.

We had a couch in the den with a fold out bed. After moving the TV out, I would pull out the hide-a-bed and make it up (with the help of my mom) for the night. That was my "bedroom"until we put the addition on the house in 1964, I think. At that time, Karen would have been about 5 and Rich just 4.

After the addition was done and a large "dormitory" type bedroom was built I moved back to the small bedroom. I shared that bedroom with Rich until I got married and moved out.

As you can tell, I didn't have the typical childhood bedroom situation. However, back in that era, it was very common for 2,3 or 4 kids to share a bedroom.

I have written about this in the past. The house we had was typical for one built post World War II. They were fairly small and had one bathroom. Our basement was not finished, unlike

many of the homes in that era. Typically, the family would add a bathroom and 2 bedrooms in the basement which would better accommodate a growing family.

While our house was small, it was our HOME with many good, funny, and lasting memories. Every home, no matter how small, has its little hiding places and ours was no different. My favorite hiding place was under the stairs in the basement where I could sit and nobody would bother me. I don't have a specific recall about this, but I wouldn't be surprised if I didn't sneak food down to that little cubbyhole on more than one occasion.

What would you consider your motto?



I don't have just one Motto. Over the years I have used various mottos to make memorable various concepts or, perhaps especially, when I was teaching. Here are a couple of the mottos I have frequently used.

"LOVE MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND BUT MONEY GREASES THE WHEELS". I created and began using this Motto in 1981 when I began teaching accounting to sophomores at the University of St. Thomas. Young college students can be ideologues. Unfortunately, for many of these younger folks, they were required to take accounting courses if they wanted to major in Business Administration. I would make it a point early in the semester to have a discussion with the students about their desire to have a liberal arts education that focused on the arts, humanity, philosophy and theology. I juxtaposed this desire against the requirement to take a "money" class like accountIng.

The motto helped to clarify the role of money in the pursuit of the betterment of mankind (one of the focuses of a liberal arts education) through love.

“INTEGRITY IS HAVING THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF SELF INTEREST”. This was my motto on the Boyum Barenscheer website after each of the partners were asked to include a motto and I chose this. I developed this “motto” after attending a professional education class on ethics about 12 years ago. The instructor focused much of the class time on a discussion of integrity. During the discussion a lot of people said that integrity was doing what was right etc., etc. My response, to the surprise of the instructor, was the motto above. He asked me if I were an Aristotelian philosopher-no kidding. I told him no, but I was interested in human behavior and why people did what they did. He agreed that my definition was in alignment with his; especially since one has to be able to set appropriate boundaries around what they desire and what they deserve.

My life has changed significantly since May of this year. (2023) Part of that change has been in my prayer life and looking to put my trust in God to guide my life. In that spirit, my current motto is “FIAT VOLUNTAS DEI” or in English “May God’s Will Be Done”. I have written before about how fortunate I have been in my life. Hopefully, that good fortune will continue but the older I get the more I realize that my trust in God is what I need to accept whatever the rest of my life will be. So “Fiat Voluntas

DEI.”

What advice would you give your 20-year-old self?



This is a great question! I think all of us over the age of 50 have thought about what they might have done differently in their younger years and what advice they would have given to themselves. I have thought about it many times and more so the older I get.

I have written earlier about my misspent high school years. The advice I would have given myself, more at the age of 15 perhaps, is to work harder in school, go to class and be focused on your education. By the age of 20 my high school years were well behind me and I was playing catch up in college from my lack of effort in high school. Somewhere along the line between the ages of 15 and 20 I must have figured it out because I applied myself in college and had a successful college experience.

I would have advised my 20 year old self; HAVE MORE PATIENCE, PATIENCE, PATIENCE. Unfortunately, I believe that I have made many big life decisions too hastily. Here are a couple of examples.

I got engaged to be married when I was a senior in college and married a year later. You might call it jumping off the ledge without looking below. Nowadays, it seems most people take a different approach to getting married with longer “dating” times before engagement and longer engagements. Many “younger“ people of my acquaintance now wait until their late 20’s or early 30’s to get married. Please understand that I am not necessarily commenting here about whether or not I should have gotten married, only that I really didn’t give it adequate time before the marriage.

I left my first professional career job too hastily. I was with Ernst & Ernst and had a very promising long term career path after 4 years. I was approached by another CPA firm to leave E&E and join them, which I did. If I had had more patience, I probably wouldn’t have made that move when I did.

I would have advised my 20 year old self to go out and FIND A MENTOR earlier in my life. The organization Scholars of Finance, which my son Tony has been involved with, has such a program for college age people. For many, the family of origin is not equipped to provide the advice or resources needed to help their children in a mentorship capacity . I know mine wasn’t. In

fact, some of the advice I did receive was probably not the right advice, at least for me.

SPEND MORE TIME SELECTING A CAREER. I chose the field of public accounting without a lot of deep thought. Public accounting paid higher starting salaries when compared with going to work for private companies and I made a quick decision because I needed a job. I really had no intention of spending most of my work life in a CPA firm. The fact that I was successful does not necessarily mean I should have spent as much time in the profession as I did.

How do you get your news? What news interests you?



Back in the old days, before the internet and cable television, I got almost all my news from reading the St. Paul Pioneer Press newspaper daily and watching the 10:00pm news at night. I also got the news during the day listening to the radio when I was in my car.

I never felt the need to “vet out” the news sources before the internet and cable tv exploded on the scene. I believe it’s true to say that 30 plus years ago the news was just that—news. There was very little “politics” into reporting what was actually happening, be it crime, sports, world news or whatever.

Today, I am much more selective about where I get my news. While I want a cross section of the news, and the conflicting views being expressed today, I need to be sure there is a balance. I do not take the newspaper on a daily basis anymore. I do still read the Thursday and Sunday editions of the St. Paul paper. I

also watch the evening news on tv every evening but, other than the weather, I find much of what is “the news” are actually point of view or puff pieces. I mostly watch the Fox cable channel for world news and opinion programs probably because I am more conservative in my views. I also get a fair amount of my news from MSNBC (a very liberal news outlet) on the Internet. I look at this daily. That news service runs articles from all over the political spectrum which helps me contain my conservative predilections.

I still listen to the news when I’m in my car but that is less often since I’m not commuting to work every day.

I am interested in news about what’s going on in the world, the State of Minnesota, financial and stock market news, sporting news and the seven county metro twin cities area news. I am not on any social media such as Facebook or any of the local neighborhood chat lines.

I enjoy reading the opinion section of the St. Paul paper perhaps, for no other reason, than it’s good entertainment.

I will occasionally go online and read the New York Post newspaper. That publication is much more right leaning than The NY Times. I quit reading the Times a number of years ago as their slant on the news and their viewpoint are far too liberal for me. Unfortunately, both the Minneapolis and St. Paul papers frequently run articles from the Times. I’ve yet to read one article from the Post in the local papers.

One final item. Because I read so many articles from so many sources I have taken to researching the author's backgrounds to better understand their biases. And there are quite a few.

What store did you love to go to as a child?



I will define child as under 12 years of age. Growing up I don't ever recall going shopping with my mom or dad to any large department stores where toys and games were sold. Those big department stores, like Daytons and Powers, were located in downtown Minneapolis. Back then there were no "Malls" to speak of. I did a little research and the first shopping mall to open in the USA was Southdale Center in Edina, MN. That was in 1956.

There was a strip mall about 4 blocks from our house where we bought most of our day to day things. If my memory serves me right there was a Snyder pharmacy, a Dairy Queen, a barber shop, a Red Owl food supermarket and an SS Kresge department store.

There were other stores in the strip mall area but the ones I went to the most are the ones above.

There was also a bowling alley about a block away from the strip mall that I hung around when I was a teenager.

Later on there were additions to the strip mall that brought other stores like the Tom Thumb convenience store, Sandy's Drive Inn and Perkins Pancake House.

I'm not sure I have a favorite store as a child. I would say that starting at about the age of 7 or 8 I would ride my bike to the "St. Anthony Shopping Center", as it was called back then, frequently to get an ice cream cone or a candy bar. It's quite possible that the little Dairy Queen, which by the way is still there 60 plus years later, was my favorite place when I was younger-go figure. As I got older, I hung around Sandy's drive inn, Perkins drinking coffee and the bowling alley.

Apache Plaza was the first Mall around our house. It was built in 1961, so I would have been about 10. I remember my mom going to Apache Plaza with some of my sisters to do shopping but I just don't recall that I ever went with them. I know I hung around the place a little when I older, probably 15 or so.

Times have changed significantly since I was a child. We have now graduated from buying most of our clothes etc. from the large Mall stores to shopping on line. Unfortunately, for kids growing up today the experience of going to the Mall with your parents is happening less and less.

What are your favorite musicians, bands or albums?



My taste in music runs almost exclusively to classical music. I have been listening to classical and “light classical” music for almost all of my adult life. I enjoy symphony music, classically trained musicians and singers. (I was never much of a country music fan, rock and roll or jazz fan. Lots of my friends seem to like country music.)

My favorite classical composer is Ludvig Von Beethoven. His symphony number 6, known as the Pastoral Symphony, is my favorite piece of his compositions. I also enjoy his 5th symphony as well. To a lesser degree, I enjoy works by Mozart, Handel, Johann Strauss II, Johannes Brahms and Felix Mendelssohn. Most of those composers were active writing music in the 1800’s. I don’t care all that much for any American composers like Aaron Copland or George Gershwin.

My favorite classically trained musicians are James Galway, flutist and Kelly Hall-Thompkins, violin. I have enjoyed Galway's work for many years, especially the music he plays from his native Ireland. An all time favorite played by Galway is "O Danny Boy." He is 83 years old and still active to my knowledge. I just recently, in the past 3 years, became familiar with Hall-Thompkins and her work "Love Gets Old" written and co-performed by Wouter Kellerman.

There are many classically trained singers I enjoy listening to. First and foremost is Luciano Pavarotti. His ability to hit the high C is phenomenal. I also enjoy the Spanish singer Placido Domingo and the American female operatic soprano Kathleen Battle. Their duet singing La Ci Darem La Mano in 1989 at the Met was spectacular. They were both in their prime at the time. He was 49 and she 41. Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald are two opera singers that were paired together in the 1930's and 40's and made eight movies together. My favorite is Naughty Marietta, their first movie, that was made in 1935. I have probably watched that movie at least 10 times. I really like the music and singing. They had great chemistry on the screen and off as well, if the "rumors" are true.

I listen to classical, light classical and "relaxation" music more than I watch TV. I usually have it on when I'm doing any writing, like now, or reading. It has always had a soothing effect on me.

I have three music radio channels on my car radio that I listen to. The SPA channel is my favorite, followed by the classical music channel, both on SiriusXM. I also listen, less frequently, to Minnesota Public Radio since they play only classical and light classical music. I can't listen to any of the dialogue or news reports on that channel because they are way too "woke" for me. But I like the music.

Music has the power to lift my spirits when I'm down and to make a good day even better. As I get older I find myself relaxing and listening to classical music more and more. I'm ever so thankful that I am able to hear.....

How has your life been different than what you'd imagined?



I have thought a lot about this question all week. One of the items I reflected on was “what DID I imagine my life to be like?” I’m not really sure I ever had a life plan imagined or mapped out.

Growing up Catholic, I’m sure at one point or another I thought about entering the priesthood. That quickly faded when I reached my teenage years and discovered I didn’t want to live my life in “celibacy”.

There are, however, three areas that I know are different from what I imagined while I was in college and as a younger adult.

The first is my career path. I never really intended to have a career as a Certified Public Accountant or a Certified Financial Planner. In fact, I didn’t make the decision to enter public accounting until after I had graduated from St. Thomas. Once

that decision was made, and I was hired by Ernst & Ernst on the audit staff, getting my CPA license was a foregone conclusion. I never imagined that I would keep an active CPA license for almost 50 years. But here we are today, and at age 72, I still have an active license. Obtaining my CFP(r) designation was also an afterthought and one I didn't pursue until I was 47 years old. I obtained it because I had just sold my majority interest in a business and I was "figuring out" what work might appeal to me for the next 10 years or so. As it turned out, I kept that license active until just this year- almost 24 years. I also never imagined teaching at the college level for over 12 years. But as I write about later, teaching always came pretty easy to me and I was very good at it. At least that's what the student evaluations said over those 12 years.

I also never imagined that over my post college 50 years of working (which by the way I certainly NEVER imagined) I would invest in so many companies and real estate deals. I don't have an exact count but I'm sure I have been involved in some measure of ownership in at least 15-20 companies and real estate ventures. I have never looked at myself as an entrepreneur but I guess that's exactly what I became.

The second area is my 55 year history of charitable and volunteer activity. I know as a kid my parents were not involved much in charitable or volunteer work and I never thought much about it. I suppose teaching faith formation religion classes starting at age

16, at the request of my then high school girlfriend, must have set me on the path. And I never looked back. (I did learn a lot about myself teaching those classes. It was not a chore or particularly difficult for me to prepare the class material and I was pretty good in front of an audience. I have done a fair amount of public speaking over my career and it has always come somewhat naturally to me.) This is another area where I can't count all of the charitable work and money donated to the areas I have been involved with. This is particularly true in the area of Catholic grade schools and, to a lesser degree, high school education.

The third area is my health journey. I'm not sure that one ever imagines what their health might be like over their lifetime. In my case, and especially given the Factor V Leiden blood clotting disorder that I inherited , it's a journey I have been on for more than 45 years. Add to that, and as I have written about previously, the recent health challenges I had this summer could never have been imagined. At least not by me!

So those are the three areas I thought the most about this week. I'm sure there are other areas of my life that weren't "imagined" and perhaps for good reason.

What is one of the worst trips you've ever taken? What went wrong?



The worst “ big trip” I ever took was just a few years ago. Connie and I went to Canada for 10 days in September of 2023 with Dale and Jeri Peterson. We have traveled with the Peterson’ many times before and have always had a wonderful time. Unfortunately, there were a confluence of things that added up to a lousy trip. It should be noted that the Peterson’s also agree that it was not a good trip.....

We had planned this trip for over a year. The basic itinerary is we fly into Vancouver, spent a few days there and then board the train for a two day scenic ride to Banff. From Banff we rent a car and drive to Jasper and then Lake Louise. We spent a few days each in Banff and Jasper. We were in Lake Louise for 3 days.

It should be noted up front that I was only two months out from having major surgery. I was also anemic. I was not fully

recovered from my health issues in the summer. My overall energy level was very low and walking distances of more than a quarter mile at any one time was difficult. I just didn't have the gas in the tank. Jeri has some mobility issues as well and uses a cane to get around. Her ability to walk more than a few blocks is impaired. I probably should have thought more about going on the trip but we had rescheduled already one other time. I sorely underestimated the amount of walking we did, or could have done, on the trip. Also, since we were not part of a tour, we handled all our luggage. That was really a drag. Being gone for 10 days both Connie and I packed large suitcases. We also had other smaller luggage with us. We were unpacking, packing and moving luggage constantly.

Our time in Vancouver was pretty good. We did a private tour of the city by car and that went well. However, we took a few walks along the Vancouver peer after dinner for maybe 20 minutes and I knew that was about my daily limit.

The first morning of the train ride started out poorly. We boarded the train on time and we're all set to go when we learned that one of the engines was on the fritz. That delayed us about 2 1/2 hours at the station. What was supposed to be a 9 hour train ride ended up being about 13 hours on the train. We got to our destination, Kamloops, about 9:00pm (Our original ETA was 6:00pm) and to the hotel about 10:00. We stayed overnight in Kamloops, which is about half way from Vancouver

to Banff, and needed to be up about 4:45am to get on the bus to get us back to the train station. I didn't get much sleep that night. The next morning our train left the station on time but, unfortunately, there were a number of delays along the way that necessitated us to sit on the tracks to allow other trains to go by. We did not get into Banff until about 8:00pm. We were supposed to get in about 6:00 I believe.

The train itself was nice. The crew was very good and they did a great job keeping us supplied with any food or drink we wanted. Many people took the opportunity to drink alcoholic beverages morning, noon and night. And that's definitely not my style. The scenery was great with all the mountains and such. However, for me, once you've seen one mountain you've pretty much seen them all.

Connie was very non plussed with the hotel rooms that we had during the trip. And for good reason. We were spending a tremendous amount of money to stay at the Fairmont hotels the whole trip and the rooms we were assigned were very poor for the price. The biggest issue was the size of the bathroom. Connie spent a lot of time getting us better accommodations, but that's not what she should have had to do.

The final issue with the trip is that at some point mid way through the trip we all got COVID. It felt like a bad head cold and sore throat and made me very tired.(I didn't know it was COVID until we got back home.) I ended up staying in the hotel room in

Lake Louis most of the time which was really a bummer.

One thing we learned from this trip is that we need to limit our traveling vacations to “destination only”. In other words, get on a plane and get to where we are going. We can take as many day excursions as we like as long as we are not moving from hotel to hotel. No more trains, planes, boats and automobiles. Get to where we are going and enjoy ourselves there.

How would you describe your behavior as a child?



All in all I was a very well behaved child after the age of 4. Perhaps most people would answer this question that way but, believe me, when I tell you that is the absolute truth.

From what I was told by my mother, I was pretty rambunctious when I was a toddler and she was concerned about how I'd behave once I got into kindergarten. However, she was relieved to learn that I was very well behaved in school from the get go.

I went to school at a time when there were a lot of kids in my class. Too many for the size of the schoolroom. Coming from a large family and being the second oldest, I learned early on to behave myself or suffer the strong disapproval of my father. He did not tolerate any loud or rowdy behavior.

I also think growing up with five sisters and just one younger brother influenced my behavior. I had friends who grew up in households with five brothers and one sister and it seemed the

boys were always fighting. My sisters didn't physically fight with me or each other but I still needed to discern, at a young age, when they were upset with me or something else and learn to live with it.

I asked a lot of questions when I was younger. My dad would actually get a little put out with me because I was always asking why this and why that. He actually used to ask me "WHY do you have to ask so many questions?" Apparently I was very inquisitive by nature and basically came out of the womb asking questions.

I believe my mother thought I was fairly intelligent. It's possible she mistook my propensity to ask many questions with intelligence!

I also think that, by nature, I am more conscientious of others and aware of how my behavior impacts others. Perhaps that's the result of living with so many girls. I've never liked loud screaming or unruly behavior. I was never one to get into many fights. I suppose my size helped in that respect since I was generally one of the biggest kids in class. In fact, I was at times more of a "de accelerator" and mediator when kids were fighting.

I believe I am also a "caretaker" by nature. Meaning, if someone needed looking after or help I was usually willing to give it.

Don't get me wrong. I'm sure I did my share of naughty things as a child but I don't recall my bad behavior being the cause of

another's injuries.

What is the best advice your mother ever gave you?



I believe this question has to do specifically with either written or oral advice, but I will modify that definition a little and talk about non verbal advice as well. A good definition of the word advise to use is giving a recommendation either solicited or unsolicited.

It's hard to know the "best advice" I ever got from my mom. My mother was never shy about giving people advice; or her opinion for that matter. However, I think over the years, she gave much more verbal advice to my 5 sisters than to me.

There are a few items that come to mind that I will share. However, the best "advice" that I received from my mom wasn't something she SAID but rather the things she DID day in and day out that had the most impact on me.

I remember a conversation with my mom when I was old enough to begin going out with girls. I suppose I was 15 or so at the time. She told me in no uncertain terms that “if you get a girl pregnant you’re going to have to marry her”. There was no discussing or debating that issue with her. Nor, perhaps, should there have been.

When I was a junior or senior in my misspent high school years I recall my mom and I talking about college. I believe she always felt I was “college” material even though my academic performance in high school would argue against it. I don’t recall any one particular discussion or quotable piece of advice that she gave me, but rather pointed conversations about what I would do after high school. It’s good to remember that back then the Vietnam war was in full swing and I was prime to be drafted right out of high school. My draft number was 18 and our local draft board was actively calling up all eligible men with draft numbers under 100. I’m not so sure I got advice as much as a vote of confidence from her that I could do well and should go to college.

My mom lived a disciplined life. The only real bad habit she had to my knowledge was smoking cigarettes which she gave up later in Life. She didn’t drink very much and almost never to excess. She was a real “trooper” when it came to taking care of all the chores at the house. (Which, by the way, included directing us kids to get our weekend cleaning chores done). I don’t recall my

mom complaining about her lot in life. She pretty much soldiered on doing all she could to bring us up the right way with good values and morals. She modeled her faith as a Catholic which, in later life, I have now come to respect her more for. She also handled most of the household finances on a very tight budget. She was not a spendthrift. So the best “advice“ I got from my mom was nonverbal, and that was to model her behavior and own what’s going on in my life.

What's one of the most beautiful places you've ever been?



I have been to many beautiful places in my lifetime. Some of these are man made and others the work of nature. I'll talk a little about both.

We've been to France, Italy and Germany a number of times. The Bavarian Alps and forests are beautiful. The Castles and small German towns are also spectacular. Bavaria is one of the places I really enjoyed touring.

We have been to Hawaii five times over the years. My most favorite part of Hawaii, from a beauty standpoint, are the remote Rainforests. Connie and I were able to take a helicopter tour of some of them on one of our trips and they are stunning.

The French countryside with its small towns, Castles, Churches and vineyards is another beautiful place with lots to see and enjoy. On one of our trips to France we were able to take a guided

private tour by car with Dale and Jeri Peterson around the countryside and we visited many Churches and Castles. Again, one of my favorite and most beautiful places I've been.

I've always enjoyed the beauty and awe of Lake Superior. This is true especially in the early Fall when the leaves are changing and the brilliant colors come out for a short time. The beauty of the lake is not just the visual image but also its immensity and power. Whenever I see the lake I think of the Good Lord and creation. It's one of those places where I feel a strong spiritual connection to God.

Closer to home there are a number of places that I consider beautiful. One of them is the view of Lake Inverness from our back deck. We are most fortunate to have a well forested back yard that slopes down to the small lake. I'm not so sure that it's the natural beauty as much as the feeling of serenity I get sitting out there in the evenings that is beautiful.

My walking area on Cathedral Hill in St. Paul is a beautiful neighborhood area. Most of the homes date back to late 1800's and early 1900's. The area is dense with old trees and the Victorian style homes are a joy to see. There is also something beautiful about the rich history of the Cathedral Hill area with the Cathedral of St. Paul and Minneapolis at the very beginning of the neighborhood and just across the street and down a little on Summit Avenue is the James J. Hill mansion. The view backside from that side of Summit overlooking downtown

St.Paul and West St. Paul is one of the most beautiful places around.

Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis is another beautiful place close to home. I have been going there to enjoy the beauty and serenity of the Falls and the surrounding park area for over 55 years now. When the spring snow melt is in full flow the power of the water washing over the Falls is spectacular and for me spell binding.

I have always enjoyed Nicollet Island and surrounding areas in Minneapolis. The scenery from the Stone Arch bridge is amazing with St.Anthony Falls and the Mississippi River. The skyline of downtown Minneapolis from the Island is also a beautiful prospect.

I've been to many beautiful places during my lifetime. However, one of the things I have learned is that one can find beauty in almost anything from nature. All you need to do is look hard enough to see the beauty before you.

Do you have a family member you wish you'd gotten to know better?



I thought about this question for a long time this week. The one person who came to mind immediately was my father. This is going to sound like a funny thing to say, but I don't know if I could have gotten to know him any better than I did. There was always a yearning on my part to get to know him better but I never felt that it was really ever reciprocated. My dad and I were very different people (personality wise) and he did not share much about his private thoughts, at least with me anyway. He also didn't want to hear about others troubles or get involved in someone else's problems. He was a very private man and hard to get to know "below the surface". I don't recall ever having a real conversation about life in general. By all outward appearances he was a great guy and was able to get along with most anybody, but I always wondered if anyone got to know the real Jerry Paquette

or if even he did. I suppose had he lived longer I might have been able to learn more about him, but the truth is I doubt it.

At the sake of sounding arrogant there aren't any other people that come to mind who I really wish I would have known better. It might be due to the fact that I know and have known so many people in my lifetime because of the type of work I did including teaching all those years. I was fortunate to get to know a number of my aunts and uncles well and my grandma Paquette. I also feel that I knew my mom pretty well and most of my siblings. So, no regrets.

What games or toys did you enjoy most when you were young?



There was a big difference when I was growing up, compared to today, when it came to playing games or having toys. The difference was actually dictated more by the fact that every opportunity for us kids to be out of the house, we were. Our parents made sure of that. So with that in mind here are the games (mostly outdoors) I enjoyed the most .

Any game that we could play outside was, depending on the weather, the favorite game of the day. When I was in my early grade school years we played a lot of “kick the can”. In our neighborhood during the summer we played kick the can a lot. We usually had 10-15 kids at least playing the game. It can be played with as few as 3 kids or as many as 25. I enjoyed playing this game with my siblings and all the neighborhood kids.

As I got a little older, like 10 years old, I started to play touch football with the older guys. I really enjoyed touch football and I was pretty good at it.

In the summer we played a lot of “sandlot” baseball. We normally didn’t have 18 players so we would call right of second base out of bounds for righties and left of second base for lefties. That way we could play with as few as 5 or 6 players on each team. We played a ton of baseball and many of us got pretty good at it and played for our grade school and high school teams later on.

During the winter months we used to play 2 on 2 basketball outside. A few of the kids had a basketball hoop in their driveway. It never really mattered how cold it got because once we got into the game we were all sweating anyway. I enjoyed shooting baskets and playing the game “HORSE. “HORSE” is a basketball shooting game where players take turns shooting at the hoop from different locations. If someone makes a shot but everyone else misses, those people get a letter toward the word HORSE. The last person left standing wins.

One of my most fun games was playing home run derby with wiffle balls. Two of the guys in the neighborhood had fenced in back yards and we would play home run derby during the summer when I was probably 10-13 years old.

I liked to ride my bike. I got my first bike when I was about 6 or 7, I think. I rode it absolutely everywhere. Lucky for us kids we

had a neighbor, Mr.Vorpahl, who knew how to fix bikes and was willing to do it for us free of charge (except for parts of course.). Back then most of the bikes were very simple. No gears or hand brakes.

I don't remember that we played a lot of board games when we did need to be in the house, except for checkers. That was probably the one game I enjoyed the most and I played it a fair amount.

I think that pretty well sums up the toys (not many) and the games (not many board games) of my childhood. Truth is, I didn't miss playing with toys or board games because I liked playing sports whenever I could. And I did it all year round.

What's the first major news story you can remember living through as a child?



The Cuban Missile Crisis was the first major news story that I remember with any clarity. It was October of 1962 and I had just turned eleven years old. The Russians began moving missiles to Cuba in May of 1960 (one of their “puppet” states) and President John F. Kennedy gave the Russian Prime Minister, Nikita Khrushchev, an ultimatum to remove the missiles in October of 1962. Every night on our little TV we would watch the latest news to see if the Russians had backed down and agreed to move the missiles out of Cuba. It was a most scary time.

I was just starting the sixth grade when this was happening. I remember we had a number of nuclear “bomb” drills in our classroom where we were taught to get under our desk, duck and

cover our heads. (Like a lot of good it would do being under our desks if the Russians exploded a nuclear bomb in Minneapolis) But we didn't know any better at the time.

Another major news story occurred the next year in November of 1963. That was the assassination of John F. Kennedy. There was a lot of news coverage on that story as you might imagine. I have a very vivid memory of that day and the days that followed.

I was in the seventh grade at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic school and Sister Rose Celestine was our teacher. She told us of the assassination attempt and we all got down on our knees and said prayers for the President. It wasn't until later in the afternoon that his death was confirmed. I remember getting home from school about 3:30 and my mom was in tears. And then a few days later Lee Harvey Oswald (who had been arrested for the murder of the President) was assassinated on live TV by Jack Ruby in a Dallas TX police station. It's funny how these memories have stuck with me all of 60 some years later.

There are many others stories that I recall, especially as I got older like the Vietnam war and the first moon landing in 1969. But that's all for now!

What are some of your favorite family traditions?



This is a difficult question for me to answer. Unfortunately, I don't believe there are many real traditions that we maintain as a family. I considered many areas where there may be "tradition like activities" and here are some of them. Celebration of holidays, religious traditions, remembering/celebrating birthdays and other special days, and weekly dinners.

This question implies (at least to me) intergenerational tradition and I just don't see those in my history. Perhaps it's because I grew up in a post World War II family in suburban America and many of my relatives, at least on the Paquette side, lived in many different parts of the country; including my grandparents. I think traditions are more difficult to maintain when families are geographically separated.

I have attempted to start a tradition with my own children. That being the letters I have written and continue to write on an

ongoing basis the past 25 years or so. My hope is that Tony and Christina continue this tradition of writing hand written letters or even typed letters to their kids. Unfortunately, even today, it's more difficult than ever to communicate in the cursive form because many schools do not teach it. I view that as a lost art form.

Christina and I have had our own little tradition at Thanksgiving. For many years now we have been going together to buy the Turkey and dressing ingredients and then work together to prepare that portion of the Thanksgiving dinner the night before. It becomes more difficult to do that as years go by as her own family's duties don't allow her the time to do that. Perhaps as the years go by she will continue this little tradition with one (or all) of her children.

Finally, I'll leave you with the following quote from a Catholic priest by the name of Walter Burghhardt SJ and defines our Catholic tradition thus: "Tradition is not some musty museum piece, beyond alteration and improvement. Rather tradition in its most pregnant sense: the best of our past, infused with the insights of the present, with a view to a richer, more catholic future." I think this also speaks to our family traditions as well.

How has the country changed during your lifetime?



The United States has undergone major changes during my lifetime. I will discuss these changes by grouping them into 4 interrelated areas: Cultural, Political, Religious and Education. There have been a few positive changes over my lifetime in these areas and, in my opinion, many not so positive changes.

The word culture can be defined many ways. I will broadly define culture as the social behavior of a society. Our way of life, socially, has changed much the last 50 years. The breakdown of the nuclear family along with a diminishing work ethic has much to do with what, I view, as the deterioration of our society. In today's society there is a wide held belief that we are "owed" a living, that we have a "right" to affordable housing and a "right" to free medical care and a "right" to free college tuition. The demand for these so called "rights" has been increasing

steadily since about 1990.....

Our political/governmental beliefs have become much more liberal over my lifetime resulting in less law and order in the country. Law enforcement (not policing) is much more lenient. This is especially true in Minnesota where we have been under the heavy influence of liberal politicians and prosecutors for many years. Policing has come under attack by many and the respect for police officers has significantly diminished. One little example: 40 years ago ignoring a lawful order by a police officer was almost unheard of. This is especially true in situations where you have been pulled over in your car. When I was growing up our parents taught us to respect authority as did our teachers, especially in Catholic schools AND police officers.

Unfortunately, structured religious faith has significantly diminished the past 50 years and this is one more reason there has been a decay in the fabric of our society. All one needs to do is look at Sunday Mass attendance today compared to 50 years ago. When I was growing up we had 5 Sunday Masses and they were mostly full. Today most Parishes have 2 Masses on a Sunday with about 30-50% of the pews empty. I also think that the diminishing influence of the Catholic Church has caused a greater need by many people to lean on "society" for when their emotional and psychological needs are not being met. I wonder how many people today would talk with a Priest or Minister when they are in need of emotional support or some guidance in

the area of what is right and wrong.

I believe our public education system is significantly worse today compared to 40 years ago. This is not necessarily all the fault of the teachers. With the breakdown in the nuclear family, more lawlessness, less individual discipline and the necessity of social welfare programs to be more heavily involved with raising children, our public schools have generally failed in being able to educate kids at their grade level. I believe that children from birth to 7 years old are getting substantially less parental supervision and love than years ago.

Catholic schools, on the other hand, have had a much greater success rate over these past 40 plus years precisely because of the strength of the Catholic family and the positive influence of religion on the child's values, discipline and moral systems.

If you had the chance to do it all over, what would you do differently?



As I thought about this question I realized that I seldom look back to decisions I've made, or actions I've taken, and second guess myself. Not that I haven't made decisions or done things that I would do differently. I think it's in my nature to move on once I've decided on a direction and not look back.

This question also assumes that one had, or has, the option to make different choices. I believe I have written before about growing up with somewhat limited funds especially when I was choosing a college to attend. There was no option for me to go to school out state. However, as it turned out, attending and graduating from St. Thomas college was a positive experience for me. The other limitation I had was the necessity to work at least 20-25 hours during the college school year and full time plus during the summers. And after graduation, there was no choice

but to start work immediately. The point is I never gave any thought to really doing things differently, especially in my younger years.

There is one notable area where I should have done things differently. I strongly regret not applying myself more rigorously to my studies while in high school. Looking back, I would have been much better off staying focused and engaged on my academics.

This may sound kind of funny, but I did not have a grand plan coming out of college about what I wanted “to be”, where I wanted to live or what I wanted to do for a career. I sort of “fell into” the CPA route more because I needed a good paying job and I was pretty good with numbers, rather than a conscious decision to become a Partner in a CPA firm.

I can honestly say I would not have done much differently when it comes to having and raising Tony and Christina. I was very involved in their pre college daily lives, maybe too much for their liking, including the sports they played, the schools they went to, knowing their whereabouts, and just being present in their lives.

To be truthful there are a number of things I can think of that I COULD have done differently but not many that I SHOULD have done differently. Perhaps that’s the marker of a life, on balance, lived well and happy. Although I will be the first person to admit that I don’t always act that way!

I believe that God has a hand in all aspects of our life. Perhaps one of the things I could have done differently would be to engage more robustly in my prayer life in my earlier years. Without prayer now it would be difficult for me to discern His will and even with prayer I still have difficulty in knowing His will. I still feel , even at age 73, that I'm stumbling a little through life and just trying to make decisions with the best information I have. The difference is I'm learning to lean more heavily on the Good Lord for the years I have left.

What are some of your biggest pet peeves?



If you have read any of my previous answers you know I like to define words and phrases. For this question, I looked up the definition of Pet Peeve and here is what it said: “A Pet Peeve is something that a particular person finds especially annoying.” That’s a fairly broad definition and, so upon a little more research, I discovered an article that listed 87 Pet Peeves that people have. I won’t list any of those specifically, but it did help me to identify some of mine.

My biggest Pet Peeve is loud noise in a confined area. TV sets where the volume is too high and loud music are the two that bother me the most. As I get older, I notice that many people my age are hard of hearing and, as a result, they talk louder and have the need for volume to be turned up on whatever device they are using.

Distracted drivers are a pet peeve of mine. They are also a major road hazard. When I notice a driver not paying attention to the road because they are texting , that really annoys me. Drivers who are “all over the road” and who speed up and then slow down are also part of this particular pet peeve.

Being late is a big pet peeve of mine. I am almost always 10 minutes early for any meeting set for a predetermined time. On the other hand, if someone is going to be late to a meeting with me and lets me know beforehand that's fine.

Inane conversation is another of my Pet Peeves. Some people are able to have conversations on all sorts of surface level topics. I'm not one of them. I thrive on deep, meaningful, sometime spiritual conversations. I know I'm unusual that way as most people would seem to shy away from “deep” conversations.

Before I leave this question I want to add another thought that may be a little off topic but fits with what I just wrote above. As I become older, I seem to have a lot more Pet Peeves. I suppose this is natural and fits the profile of many aging people. The concern I have is that I am growing more intolerant of others, but simply calling it Pet Peeves. As I grow older I need to keep that in mind and understand the difference.

What was your wedding like?



Connie and I had a wedding Mass (The Sacrament of Marriage) on Saturday June 1, 1974. It was held at the old St. Ambrose Church on the East side of St. Paul. St. Ambrose was Connie's home parish. Back then, Catholic weddings were almost always held at the bride's parish. We did our wedding preparation with Fr. Tom Pignatore, the Pastor. A week before we were to be married Fr. Pignatore was hospitalized with severe ulcers in his stomach and was unable to do the ceremony. (Hopefully, the ulcers weren't the result of any regrets in marrying us.) That caused a lot of consternation, especially on the part of Connie's mom since she had her heart set on Fr. Pignatore , whom she knew well. The substitute was Fr. Richard Villano who had been an associate Pastor at my home Parish and, luckily, was available.

The 11:00am Wedding Mass was immediately followed by a wedding brunch for about 60 family members and the bridal party. This was held at Connie's family's favorite Italian restaurant, Geno's. The restaurant was just a few blocks from the church which worked out very well. We had a complete Italian dinner and I'm pretty sure that, by the time it finished about 3:30pm, nobody went home hungry.

Our wedding reception was a large, well planned event with over 500 family and friends. (As a sidebar, Connie and I got engaged in April of 1973 and we immediately set a June 1, 1974 wedding date. Part of the reason we set it for over a year out was because we (Connie) wanted to complete her degree at St. Catherines which she did in May of 1974. The other reason for the long engagement (by 1974 standards) was because it took a long time to plan a wedding of our size).

The Wedding reception was at the old Prom Center on University Avenue in St. Paul. It was one of the few venues that could handle a crowd of that size where we could still buy and bring in our own alcohol and hire our own bartenders. I can't recall who catered the food. The bar was open ALL NIGHT LONG from 6:00pm until about midnight. It was one heck of a lively party and I don't think anyone went home either thirsty or hungry. We had a 12 piece orchestra that played great dance music the whole night. (The Dick Macko orchestra I believe) They played a lot of the 1940's era "swing" music that we all liked and could dance

to.

Our wedding day was great! I remember that after the reception was over and we made it to our hotel in Minneapolis both Connie and I were exhausted. I'm pretty sure that the minute our heads hit the bed we were out.....

What are your favorite movies?



I had a good time this week thinking about my favorite movies in preparation for writing this answer. When you get to be 72, most people at that age have probably seen hundreds, if not thousands, of movies over their lifetime. The past 20 years, with the preponderance of cable TV, has allowed for an explosion of the number of movies available to watch. My guess is, on average, I probably watch 2 to 3 movies a week on TV. We do go out to the movie theater but much less frequently now than we did in the past. We go out maybe once every couple of months. Years ago we would probably go to the theater once every couple of weeks.

There are many movies I enjoyed watching over the years in a number of different genres : Western/Cowboy, Romance, Action, Film Noir and Spy to name a few. Of note, perhaps, is that I was never a fan of Horror movies.....

I thought about a lot of movies that I watched in my younger years and a few came to mind that were real “block busters”. One was the movie JAWS which came out in 1975 and starred Richard Dreyfuss and Roy Scheider. It was all about the killing of a young women by a massive white shark off the coast of a small American town. I recall that when Connie and I went to the show, the patrons were lined up around the block 1/2 hour before the movie was supposed to start.

Another favorite of mine is Pride and Prejudice. There have been a number of versions of this Jane Austen story made over the years, but I prefer the one made in 1995 starring Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle. I have probably watched this movie at least 10 times and it's a long movie at 327 minutes. I'm attracted to the characters in Victorian era shows because they are people of civility, culture, strong principles and moral values. Courtship in those times was both honorable and deliberate. It seemed to me that Austen's Pride and Prejudice did an excellent job of letting us know the good and bad about the main characters. The movie, being as long as it was, allowed for the time to do it. There was also an unmistakable chemistry between Firth and Elhe which drew me more to those characters. It should be noted that Mr. Firth and Ms. Ehle also had a fairly long off screen relationship during and after the show's filming.

I think my favorite show of all time is a little known Western by the name of Conagher. It starred Sam Elliot and Katharine Ross

(who have been married for 38 years in real life). The movie was made in 1991. It's about the life of a cowboy in 1880's Colorado who falls in love with a widowed woman with 2 children. I have seen this movie at least 10 times as well and know the entire dialogue by heart. I find the character of Conagher, as played by Sam Elliot, to be one of (what I would imagine to be anyway) the most realistic portrayals of life back in the 1870's. And beyond that the character is one of the most honorable and principled people I have ever witnessed on the screen. The love story between Elliot and Ross on screen is compelling but it's the dialogue of Conagher about his beliefs, virtues and morals with the other characters in the film that makes this film special for me. One needs to watch the show 3 or 4 times to really get a feel for the reality played out on the screen.

Anyway, there you have it. Interestingly, the movies above are all more than 28 years old. That should tell you something about what I think of "modern" film making.

What is one of the stupidest things you've ever done?



First off, it should be clearly understood that when one reaches the age of 72, there are many stupid things to choose to write about and many stupid things that should not be written about!

One of the stupidest things I did was to drive regularly before I had a drivers license. In Minnesota, you couldn't get a drivers license before the age of 16. However, I didn't let that fact deter me from taking my mom's old 1960 Chev out and about when I just reached the age of 15. My mom did not like to drive and always left her car at home when she went to work. (My dad usually took her to work and picked her up on his way home.) That usually left the car unattended from 7:30am until about 5:00pm most weekdays.

I would usually drive to school and be sure to get back home before either my mom or dad.

As if driving without a license wasn't bad enough, the car did not have a working speedometer. I had no way of knowing, precisely, how fast I was going. That became a real issue when I would be driving and a police car would be behind me.

I probably drove for at least a year before I got my license and during that time I was never stopped by the police or had any accidents. In a word, I was LUCKY!!

Years later I would find out that my dad and older siblings ALL KNEW that I was driving that car without a license.....

Another stupid thing I did was to do some rock climbing down by the Mississippi River when I was a freshman in college. I remember one night (I was out with a bunch of my buddies who were probably inebriated) we decided it would be a good idea to do some cliff and rock climbing. This was a summer late night outing, like 1:00am in the morning, and pitch dark outside. What I recall vividly is getting to a point in the climb that the cliff was convex, meaning it was curved outward. We didn't have any support ropes or other climbing equipment and I thought I was going to fall backwards off the cliff. I know I stayed very still on that cliff until I could get my wits about me and finally was able to slide along the cliff to an area that was more concave and I could get purchase with my hands and feet to climb the rest of the way. I don't think I have been that scared again in my whole

life.

I'm going to revisit a common theme in my writings by talking about my lack of commitment to my high school studies as one of the stupidest things I ever did. Unfortunately, this stupid thing was not a "one off". It was something I did from the start of my sophomore year in high school all the way through my senior year. I'm just grateful that I saw the light when I got to college and my lack of high school rigor did not significantly effect my success in college.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?



It's interesting that as I write this response I am on a Disney Cruise ship with Christina and her family. We flew to Fort Lauderdale Florida on Saturday, March 2 and are due to return home on Friday, March 8. Based on this and other like experiences, one place I'm pretty sure I don't want to live is Florida or anywhere near the Caribbean. It's just too warm for me.

Connie and I have traveled to many areas of the United States, Mexico, Canada and Europe over our lifetime. I can say that there are a few places I might consider living, but only in the event I was not able to live where I do now in Minnesota.

I am at heart a "homebody". I have never been smitten with the travel bug and my preference is to stay at home in the Twin Cities. I have never seriously considered living anywhere else.

Just the thought of not living in Minnesota causes me a little angst.

There are a few places that I would consider living if I could not live in Minnesota. One is Quebec City in Canada. I have always liked that city and the weather is very similar to Minnesota with the 4 distinctive seasons. I feel a little “pull” to that city because it’s where my 15th generation great grandfather landed in North America. (I believe it was 1594 and he was in the French army.). He stayed in Canada and never went home after he left the army. My ancestors went west across Canada and then down to Minnesota in the early/mid 1800’s from what I can ascertain.

Of all the other international travel we did over the years my favorite was Scandanavia. I especially liked the pace and strength of the people of Finland. They seem to be a people who a very proud of their heritage . Interestingly, Finland also has the look and feel of Minnesota and its climate is very similar. Maybe a part of my affinity with the Scandinavian countries is because so many Minnesotans are originally from that part of the world and I have had some exposure to the culture of the people and their lifestyle.

Of all the non US cities we have visited, I liked Paris second only to Quebec City. I can see myself living there for a time but don’t know if I could become a Parisian on a full time basis.

As far as other cities in the United States, I have definitely not been to one that’s better than the Twin Cities. In fact, given all

the chaos in today's world and the number of cities that have chosen to be "soft on crime" I would not live in a City larger than the Twin Cities. (Unfortunately, the Twin Cities have become increasingly soft on crime but, as yet, it's still bearable.) Instead, if I had to move, I'd opt for a smaller town, perhaps under 250,000 people and maybe as small as 100,000, as long as there was sufficient law and order.

So there you have it. As far I'm concerned I'm living the dream exactly where I want to be.

What do you miss about being a child?



I miss the innocence and simplicity of my childhood most of all. As a child, I felt a clearer distinction between right and wrong, good and bad. The values and lessons I was taught at home were also taught at school and at Church. It was that constant reinforcement between the three that made life simpler and easier to understand.

There was little confusion about what was right and what was wrong amongst the kids my age. Not that everyone acted correctly, but rather it seemed that if someone did something wrong, they knew it. There was no “gaslighting” going on where I grew up. If someone tried to stretch the truth or deny that something had happened, even though it was clear that it had, we would put them in their place pretty fast.

Another aspect of my childhood that I miss is my robust health and pain free life. I was very fortunate to have a healthy

childhood. Oh, I had the usual upset stomachs and ear aches but I never had anything that held me back from playing sports or being involved in other childhood activities. My first significant health issue was my broken foot that I sustained when I was a sophomore in high school. I was generally very healthy in college and fortunate enough to find work in areas that my strong back and large size gave me opportunities to get good paying hard labor work to pay tuition.

I miss the last day of school knowing I had a whole summer off and no fixed commitments. This would have been before I got out of grade school. I can still remember the feeling of freedom walking home on those last days of school with no more tests.

There is a phrase that I use quite often to describe where I'm at now in my 70's: " There are no more junior proms on my horizon." My meaning is that I have lived most of my life and my future options and dreams are somewhat limited due to age. People can argue that you're never too old to dream and that's true. But for most of us, big ideas as you get old are just that; a dream. Don't get me wrong. I still have things I want to do and am able to do them. However, I need to put those things through the realistic filter of a guy my age.

What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?



I gave a lot of thought to this week's question. A few days ago, I listed ten of my life lessons as a "starting point" for this week's answer. The more I have thought about my life's lessons and how to put them on paper the more it made sense to just let the ten lessons stand on their own and then write some additional thoughts as well. Here are ten life lessons I've learned in no particular order of priority:

- *Live a life with structure and discipline.
- *Work hard and in a focused manner.
- *Arrive early.
- *Avoid bad habits. Smoking, drinking, drug use and gambling don't make you a better person.
- *Save at least 10% of what you earn. Invest prudently.

*Look ahead not behind. Learn from your successes and mistakes, but what's past is past.

*Continue to seek opportunities for spiritual and human growth.

*Rely on your spiritual base and trust in God. HE will get you through the tough times.

*Have patience with yourself and others.

*Love your children unconditionally. Spend the time to teach them right from wrong and good from bad. Be firm and supportive.

I may have written about this in a prior answer. But one lesson I learned a little later in life was that the greatest predictor of success is time spent on task. The one caveat I will add is that the "time" must be quality time. Going through the motions or spending time on something while being constantly interrupted probably won't get you to your goal.

For those of you that know me well this last life lesson will come as no surprise. I am a true believer in "it is better to give than to receive". When most people think about WHAT is given they will think of gifts of money or other tangible goods. But beyond that, the giving can be of one's self in a totally unconditional way. For me, I have been very fortunate to have abundance in my life and, as a result, to give to others who have not been as fortunate.

If you could hold on to just one memory from your life forever, what would that be?



Normally I begin these answers/story's with a statement about how much "thought" I needed to put into the answer before I started writing. This one is different. As soon as I read the question, I knew what I was going to write about. I did give a lot of thought during the week about why this one memory, among the many I have, was without question the one memory I want to hold onto forever.

The birth of my children is the one memory that I hope I never forget. But it's not just about the actual birth event when Tony and Christina were born. It's more about everything that lead up to them.

I don't know of any better "feeling" than when you first learn that you're going to have a baby. When Connie learned that she was pregnant, it was very welcome news because we wanted to have children and were beginning to get the questions (after 3 years of marriage — especially from the grandparents) " When are you going to have a baby?". Obviously, nobody except the good Lord himself can answer that but it's usually asked anyway. The memory of going to birth preparation classes, which were fairly new back in the 1970's, is still very vivid in my memory and more so because it was a great time of bonding and intimacy with Connie, as well as the shared anticipation of what's to come. Again, we both wanted very much to have children and Tony was the first grandchild and great grandchild on both sides of the family.

After all the planning and preparation for the birth and the concern about the health of the babies etc., the actual labor and birth of both the kids was extraordinary easy.....At least for me. Apparently, both Tony and Christina really wanted to come into this world without a lot of fuss. Meaning, Connie delivered both children in record time without a minute to spare to get to the hospital. To say she was a real trooper is a gross understatement. There was no prolonged labor in the hospital for 24 hours, swearing and cursing me out for getting her pregnant or any issues with the actual delivery itself— other than it was extremely quick in both cases. All I can say is we were blessed.

When the in-hospital Pediatrician, after examining both Tony and Christina, albeit 5 years apart, said “ You both did a great job. 100% normal and healthy children”, there was no doubt.

One last memory that is worth noting and one I don't think I have shared before. It was just after Tony was born, about 9:00am, and Connie was dozing with him sleeping on her chest. Connie's mom Mary Jane was the first person to arrive. The look on her face was so precious and endearing when she first came into the room. I don't think I have ever seen anyone more serenely happy than her at that moment. I knew then that our children would be loved forever beyond Connie and me. And, indeed they were; especially by grandma Mary Jane.

What traits do you share with your father?

End of Volume One



I've have never given much thought to the traits I share with my father. For my mind, I have always thought myself to be very different from him. Earlier this week I sat down and listed those traits that were like my dad and those that weren't. I also looked up the definition of the word "Traits" and according to GOOGLE it's " a distinguishing quality or characteristic." A very simple definition. Upon further research I learned there are different types of traits: Physical, Athletic, Personality, Character. Much has been written about them, especially personality and character.

I'll start with the easy one, physical. As I get older people tell me I look a lot like my dad. I suppose that's true, especially how we look around our eyes. My dad was also a pretty big guy, as am I.

My dad wasn't as tall as me, but we are definitely built alike. The other thing I notice is that we definitely share a liking for the same kind of food. Herring, pickled beets, soda crackers with butter, crackers with peanut butter and pickles and liverwurst to name just a few. I'm not sure those are shared traits, but what the heck.

Both my dad and I were pretty good athletes. We were never real fast, but we had quick twitch reflexes and that helped us in the sports we played.

From a personality and characteristic standpoint, we are both quick witted, affable, and (generally) easy to get along with. I also think we are more laid back and non-confrontational. My dad and I were also pretty good with numbers. We also share a trait that I don't like all that much and that's our delicate nervous system; especially when it comes to being around loud people and noises. One last trait that we shared was our loyalty to our family. My dad had a number of traits I didn't care for, but I never doubted his loyalty to family.

I believe that I share more traits with my mom, or at least her side of the family. I won't go into those here but suffice it to say I am glad I inherited traits from both sides of the family.

This is the end of Volume 1 of this two volume book. Volume 2 is printed in a separate edition and will begin with story number 81.

