



Yes Pa

Lessons in Character

Fred W. Sarkis



Yes Pa is an abridgement and textbook edition of the autobiography, *Prisoner of the Truck*. Regional & national character education teachers, mentoring organizations and correctional officials volunteered significant assistance in the development of this free Character Building Program. Independent research studies with all of these institutions reflect positive outcomes. *Yes Pa* is electronically and freely provided by the Yes Pa Foundation, a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) corporation. Visit www.YesPa.org for free PDF downloads of *Yes Pa*, *Teacher/Mentor Resource Guide*, *Testimonial Videos* and other *Videos* that complete this character-building program.

"Messages of character have to be delivered by a person of character. Fred Sarkis is such a person, and the story of his remarkable life will help anyone, young or old, to be a better person and lead a better life. *Yes Pa* has the power to touch hearts and bring out the best in us all."

—Dr. Thomas Lickona, author, *Character Matters*, and Director, Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility), www.cortland.edu/character

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The Mission of the Yes Pa Foundation

The mission of the Yes Pa Foundation is to assist young people in developing strong personal character that includes a positive attitude, perseverance, and a confident sense of being able to affect their future by the choices they make. The Yes Pa program emphasizes honesty, determination, and enthusiasm as keys to success in school and in life.

Yes Pa is an abridgement and textbook edition of the 372-page autobiography, *Prisoner of the Truck*. All royalties from the sale of *Prisoner of the Truck*, go to support the Yes Pa Foundation.

Prisoner of the Truck may be purchased on the **www.YesPa.org** website or through any bookstore in the U.S., including Barnes and Noble and Amazon.

Note to Educators and Mentors

The right to freely print copies of *Yes Pa* from the PDF copy on the www.YesPa.org website, is a gift from the Yes Pa Foundation, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Visit www.YesPa.org for the four steps that character education teachers recommend to launch the free Yes Pa program and for tips in printing copies of Yes Pa for your participating group.

Is *Yes Pa* flexible and motivational for use in schools, families, mentoring organizations and correctional institutions?

Yes. Just take the short time it takes to just read it, and you will agree.

For schools and mentoring organizations, is there a Yes Pa Teacher Resource Guide that offers varied activities that enhance the character message while at the same time helping to meet state academic standards?

Yes, and the Guide is a free download on www.YesPa.org

Is there any research evidence of the program's effectiveness?

Yes. The results of independent outcome studies show the significant positive impact of the Yes Pa program. Check out www.YesPa.org

What do prevention specialists say about *Yes Pa*?

"The blending of prevention and character education programs results in benefits far greater than either can achieve alone."—Lynne Gochenaur, prevention specialist

What do teachers say about *Yes Pa*?

"In 19 years of teaching, I've never worked with a book that had such a profound effect on my students. In our six-week program, *Yes Pa* held their attention and got them talking about many subjects relevant to their lives. It caused them to have empathy—an emotion many middle school students rarely show. Also apparent was the improvement in their overall attitudes and academic achievement. Many went from failing to passing." —Joanne Agrasto, sixth-grade teacher

"*Yes Pa* is the best book for children I have ever read. When my students started reading *Yes Pa*, a transformation began. There was a definite decrease in negative attitudes and discipline problems. Students began to realize that they are responsible for their own future success and happiness. Not only is it a great story—it teaches morals and values."—Dan Green, sixth-grade teacher

What do parents say about *Yes Pa*?

"Why don't they have more books in school like this—morals and values instead of all that violence and stuff you can't understand?"

"This is a fantastic book. I picked it up, started reading, and read the whole thing."

"My kid never talked to me before like he has since he started reading *Yes Pa*."

"*Yes Pa* has become a family affair because my son is reading it, I am reading it, and my father is reading it. It has brought out a lot of family stories."

"I wish someone had taught me these keys to success when I was a kid."

What do mentoring organizations say about *Yes Pa*?

"Our professional match-makers line up a high school Big brother or Big sister with a Little brother or sister. *Yes Pa* is read by the big to the little. The questions at the end of each chapter stimulate dialogue between the two. Both the Bigs and Littles benefit significantly from this in-school program. It is so successful, we plan to repeat this in-school program every year."

What do correctional officials say about *Yes Pa*?

"What could be more appropriate for use in prisons than the story of a young boy who took his childhood prison and turned it into a study center. I'll let the *Yes Pa* book speak for itself. Read it and you will see why it is a motivational book for all of us."

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To many friends who made me feel that my volunteer message to kids, teachers, and parents had merit.

I thank my wife and family for allowing me to devote my time and energy as a volunteer, to motivate kids and adults to be the best they can be in character and in achievement.

And finally, to God, who gives me the good health and the energy to pursue my Foundation's national goals and mission.

FOREWORD

J. R. SMITH

If one of your parents is abusive, what do you do? If your classmates call you hurtful names, what do you do? If you are facing a personal crisis, what do you do? Fred Sarkis experienced all of these difficulties, describes them in this book, tells you how he lived through them, and relates what he learned about himself that can be helpful to others.

Sprinkled throughout his autobiography are personal stories told openly and frankly, revealing the life of a man who suffers bitter defeats, but who survives them to feel an even greater strength. There are times when his faith in himself and in God are his only resources, and it is through this self-reliance on hard work, honesty, imagination, and perseverance that the dreams of Fred Sarkis are made real.

In this book, you will learn the importance of enthusiasm, a positive attitude, the value of being true to yourself, and the power of having a dream. Confronting some of life's darkest moments during his boyhood and his maturing years in business, the author is now a loving grandfather with a smile on his face, a sparkle in his eye, and a dream in his heart. If you let him, he will captivate you with his spirit and take you on a journey of self-discovery to find life's richest rewards.

Reading this book will inspire you with its message as it reveals the inner strength of a person who loves life, confronts adversity, and demonstrates how to be of service to others with the Golden Rule as his banner.

J. R. Smith is a Professor Emeritus, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana. He was an educator for 38 years—a secondary school English teacher, a Coordinator of Humanities, a Director of Demonstration School and then a professor at Earlham College for 24 years.

A Message from Fred to Kids

The recent census shows that many kids have either a single-parent or no parent in their homes. After my many talks to kids, I often hear, “Fred, your childhood was tough, but kids with only one or no parents in the home have it rougher. At least you had all the benefits of a family, church, and love of father, mother, brothers and sisters.”

True, but in a way, we all have some form of adversity or “prison.” It is what we do with that adversity or prison that determines where we go with the rest of our lives.

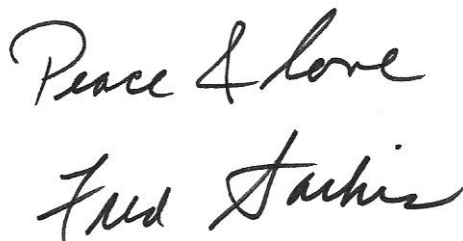
At age 12, I changed my attitude. I let my light shine. I set goals. I won my freedom. So, I yell from the rooftops: “At any age, if you put your mind to it and work hard, you can achieve any realistic goals that you set.” Sometimes it is one “mini-goal” at a time and lots of patience and practice in between.

So, here is my wish for you.

Turn your adversity into an opportunity. Never give up. Get rid of bad habits. Set realistic goals. Find resources for help, guidance, and support in ridding yourself of problems—including addiction or abuse. This support is available in schools and agencies. Check out the Yes Pa website for links to help. This kind of help did not exist when I was a boy.

I pray that the lessons of *Yes Pa* help you to find happiness in all you do—and the courage and determination to take any failure and turn it into success.

Fred W. Sarkis, Author, Speaker, and Volunteer



Peace & love
Fred Sarkis

P.S. Enjoy the kid videos, make a guest book entry and/or check out "Helpful Links" to organizations that help those in need. Guidance is also available from your school advisors or mentors.

www.YesPa.org

Chapter 1 - Childhood Memories

This is the year 2007. I am 81 years old. Let me tell you what it was like when I was six years old, way back in 1932. Herbert Hoover was our President. I was in the first grade in a Catholic school.

The times were very, very hard. Jobs were not easy to get. A lot of people depended on the government for clothes, shoes, and coal to heat homes.



A photo of 11 Evergreen Street in Rochester, NY
We lived in the left half of it.

Mothers didn't work outside the home, but they were busy homemakers both day and night. There were no washers, dryers, stoves, or refrigerators. Washing was done by hand in a twenty-five gallon washtub with a washboard. Wet clothes were hung outside on a clothesline to dry. Stoves were usually wood or coal-fired and the refrigerators were actually iceboxes. Chunks of coal, about the size of a lemon, were used to heat our kitchen stove. My mom would bake bread, pies, and cakes in the stove's oven. There always was a large pot of water steaming away on the back of the stove.

If you had a cold, you could wrap a towel around your head, drape it over the water pot, and the warm steam would give you some relief. If you dropped water from a teaspoon onto the top of the hot stove, the water would break up into tiny bits and would jump and bounce in a wild dance before it disappeared into a wisp of hot steam.

The iceman would come to our house about once a week back then. He would go to the back of his wagon, dig out a huge, square fifteen-pound block of ice from the sawdust and carry it on his shoulder into the house. My mother would pay him fifteen cents, chat briefly, and he would be off to the next house. Every kitchen had an icebox to keep milk, butter, eggs, and vegetables from spoiling.

The milkman delivered fresh milk, right to our doorstep, every morning and put it into the milk box. Our milk box had two small doors, one on the outside of the house and one on the inside of the house. The milkman would come at about five o'clock every morning. He would open the outside door and take the clean, empty bottles and an envelope with money in it that my mother has put in there the night before. Then he would place two cold, fresh quarts of milk on the shelf inside the box and leave. I can still hear those empty milk bottles clanking against each other as he walked down the sidewalk.

During the winter months, the coal man delivered lump coal which we used to heat our house. He used a slide, like you see in a children's park, to transfer the coal from his truck through the cellar window into a coal-bin in the cellar.

At age six, I started to learn how to shovel coal into the big furnace. To get a fire going, I would start with paper and sticks. Then I would shovel coal into the big opened door in the furnace. The coal would catch on fire and heat the house. The burning coal would last for several hours. The furnace had big round tubes that would take the heat upstairs to each room.

The red-hot coals would slowly burn down and turn to ash and cinder. A heavy furnace wrench was used to shake the grates the coal fire was resting on. The ashes from the burned coal fell to the bottom part of the furnace. Someone had to take out the ashes every day in metal bushel baskets. Every time this was done, the ashes made clouds of dust. This dust filled the basement and got into your eyes, nose, hair, mouth, and all over your clothes. You could smell and taste the sulfuric ash that filled the air. Every time the ashes were sifted, you had to take a bath or at least brush off your clothes. Any pieces of coal that didn't go down through the sifter were thrown back onto the glowing fire along with new coal. The metal bushel baskets of ashes were set out by the street and were picked up by the trash collectors. Some ashes and cinders were spread on the icy sidewalks and walkways of the city so that people would not slip and fall.

Kids found a variety of ways to amuse themselves. There weren't any computers, CD players, video games, or cell phones. Very few people in my neighborhood even had a television, radio, or telephone. Children played outdoor games like hopscotch and skipping rope. Leather baseballs and footballs were old and cracked. Some of them were coming apart at the seams, but you could still throw them, catch them, and have a good time. There weren't any basketball or tennis courts. Those sports weren't all that popular yet.

A bus or trolley would take you to the city park or beach for some summer fun. During the winter, we would go sledding when there was enough snow. A few kids in the neighborhood had sleds, and one had an old beat-up toboggan. Back then, ice skates and roller skates were fastened to

your shoes with metal clamps. Kids also played a variety of indoor games including cards, jacks, and pick-up-sticks. We also played a game with different size lids and caps from bottles and jars. We would spin them across the linoleum kitchen floor and they would bob and weave in and out of the legs of the kitchen stove, table, and chairs. Sometimes they would slowly wobble into a corner. Other times they would smash into each other with a rattling crash! No matter how poor the families were, the children always found imaginative ways to have fun, any time, anywhere.

In those days, automobile tires had an inner-tube inside of them. In order to fix a flat tire, you had to take the inner-tube out of the tire, fix the leak with rubber cement and a rubber patch, put it back into the tire, blow it up to seal it properly, and attach it to the wheel of the car. Sometimes, people would just buy a new inner tube and throw away the old one. Kids always found a use for throw-away inner tubes. Most of the time they were inflated, to be used for family fun at the lake or for rolling in circles on the grass—sometimes with a small kid tucked inside the inner rim.

We made thick, heavy duty rubber guns out of these throw-away inner tubes. All we needed was a long piece of wood about 16 x 3 x 1/2 inches, two thin slices from an inner tube, a nail, and a broken clothes pin. These two slices of inner tube would be stretched tightly to hold the broken clothes pin in place to form a trigger. A nail would form the trigger finger. Another slice of the inner-tube would be stretched tight and inserted into the head of the clothes pin. You were ready to fire a harmless king-sized rubber band from a homemade gun. You had to be quick to dodge a rubber bullet. We all had several extra rubber bands so that we could reload and re-shoot. Playing with a half dozen kids, the winner would be the last one who didn't get hit by a rubber band.

On Halloween, we would get an empty tin can, punch a lot of nail holes into it, and attach a wire long enough to swing the can in wide circles. We would then fill the can with very dry and crispy fallen leaves. We would use a match to start a small fire in the can. It was kind of tricky to make it work right. When smoke came out of the can, we would swing the can in all kinds of circles creating a variety of circles of smoke as we marched up and down the sidewalks. We were careful. Parents allowed it. It was fun. No one ever got hurt.

Only a few families on our street had automobiles. Street trolleys, also known as streetcars, took people wherever they wanted to go. There were no school buses. You had to walk to the nearest school in your neighborhood. There were no large grocery stores, no malls, no Wal-Mart, no Wegmans Supermarkets, but there were large department stores in the heart of the city and small grocery stores in each neighborhood.

My mother put in long hours every day cooking meals, doing laundry, changing diapers—lots of diapers—and keeping our house "spic and

span." She was patient, sweet, caring, and loving. When I was four years old, I had a baby sister named Shirley. She was born prematurely. She was so tiny when she was born that she could actually sleep in a cigar box that my mother had lined with cotton and linen. A cigar box is not much bigger than a middle-sized dictionary. On cold days, my mother would place the cigar box next to the stove to keep little Shirley warm. (Today, hospitals have incubators to keep premature babies alive.) Sadly, Shirley was not strong enough to live. She died when she was eighteen months old. No one could believe that my mother could keep her alive for so long, but I could.

During the Great Depression, when I was six years old, millions of people lost their jobs and their businesses. Hundreds of people stood in lines for hours just to get a little help from the government so they could feed their families, get clothes to wear, or get coal to heat their homes. My father owned a small ice cream and candy store on Main Street in Rochester. But people stopped buying ice cream and candy. They had to save their money for food and shelter.

My father lost his ice cream store. If you get way behind in monthly payments to the bank, the bank has to take your building away and sell it to someone else. My father was very, very sad. He had to find another way to support his growing family, so he went and bought a horse and wagon. He would get up very early in the morning and go to the public market to buy fruits and vegetables from the area farmers. He made a living by driving his horse and wagon to people's homes where they would buy his produce.

Drugs, as we know them, were not a problem during the Great Depression. Back then, drugs were something you got from the doctor to make you better. Some people drank too much beer and whiskey. Even though times were tough, some people seemed to find enough money to keep drinking.

When I started the first grade, I knew nothing about depressions. I was a happy young boy who loved to play outdoors with his friends. My mother made our home a happy and safe place to be, even though my father did not always speak nicely to her. His tone of voice often scared me. Once, he got mad at my mother and dragged her across the kitchen floor by her hair. It did not last long though. My father said he was sorry. My mother told me that he acted that way because he was under a lot of pressure from losing the ice cream and candy store. She told us that he felt sad inside because he didn't have the money to buy nice things for his family.

My father made enough money with the horse and wagon to buy a small, used, 1925 Ford truck. He still got up every morning at four o'clock to go to the public market to buy fruits and vegetables from the local farmers.

By this time, he had a route of steady customers. He divided the city of Rochester in half. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, he called on

the west side of the Genesee River. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays he covered the east side. Parked along the curb, in front of their houses, my father sold his produce to housewives all over the city of Rochester. It was convenient for them. They didn't have to walk or travel to the grocery store or to the public market. My father delivered fresh food at a fair price, right to their doorsteps.

During the winter, the ladies would put on their winter coats and hats, come outside, and step up into the back of the truck that had wooden sides and a top, but no windows. A kerosene lamp in the back gave off both light and heat. The heat prevented the produce from freezing and provided a bit of warmth for the customer and my father as they did business inside the back of that old truck. The hours were very long and my father worked very hard. Normally he didn't get home until around 8:00 P.M. during weekdays and on Saturdays he didn't come home until about 11:00 P.M.

Questions a teacher or mentor should ask a student:

1. Compare and contrast your childhood environment with Fred's. Whose childhood was more difficult? Explain why.

2. Would you rather live back then, or now? Explain.

Students - Talk to your parents or mentors about the following:

1. What were things like when you were a kid? How were they different from how things are today? How were they similar?

2. Do financial problems sometimes cause difficulties and stress for your family or for your mentor?

3. Why is it important for kids to help in their families? How much work should they have to do?

Chapter 2 - Sticks and Stones



Holy Rosary School, Rochester, NY

My first day of school in the first grade was at Holy Rosary Catholic School on Lexington Avenue in Rochester. There were forty kids in our class, so it was not easy for the teacher to get to know all of us. Since I was very shy, I did not make friends with my classmates at the Catholic school. Most of my friends went to the public school down the street.

After a few weeks of being in the first grade, I overheard two girls whispering behind my back. One said to the other, “He’s not only skinny, pigeon-toed, knock-kneed and bow-legged, but he’s very, very dark.”

I wanted to turn around and say what my mother had taught me. “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me.”

Instead, I pretended that I didn’t hear her. My mother was wrong; names can definitely hurt you, and they did. After school that day, I rushed home and stood in front of the large mirror in my mother’s bedroom. It was true. I was everything that young girl had said I was. For the first time in my life, I did not like who I was or the way I looked. I didn’t like my body. I didn’t like the color of my skin. I wanted to have light skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes like the other children in my class. I had so many feelings and emotions boiling up inside of me, but I kept all that hurt to myself.

My six-year old friend, Bobby York, lived right next door to us. He had light skin, blonde hair, blue eyes, and he was an only child. One day, he asked me if I wanted to live with his family for a while. He told me that his parents had said it was okay to ask. I spoke to my mother about the possibility. She seemed surprised at first and asked me if I was unhappy living with our family. I told her that I was happy, but I thought it would be interesting to live at the York house for a while. She said no, and that it was not a good idea to begin with. I was very disappointed with her decision, but I didn’t let her know what I was thinking, because I didn’t want her to feel

bad about giving me my dark skin, dark hair, and dark eyes. I really wanted to live with the Yorks. I figured that if you could catch measles or chicken pox from people that you lived with, maybe you could catch the color of their skin, hair, and eyes. I just wanted to be like my classmates. I did not talk to anyone about my feelings, nor did I spend an overnight at Bobby York's house. I just kept going to school every day, feeling sorry for myself.

Later that same school year, our teacher gave all of us the names of every student in our class. It was just about a week before Valentine's Day. My mother helped me print every one of those student's names on small Valentine's Day cards she bought for me. Valentine's Day finally arrived and all the cards were passed out. I looked around at everyone else's desks, piled high with Valentines, and then back to mine, where there were two lonely cards. I felt that only TWO kids in the entire class liked me.

When I turned seven, I entered the second grade. Later that year, three boys caught me in the schoolyard and pinned me to the ground. Then they proceeded to pull my pants off and they played Keep-Away with them. I jumped up and down trying to snatch them out of the air. If I could catch them, I could escape and be free of the laughter and mockery. Finally, I gave up and sat down on the grass, crying. After a few minutes, a husky boy from the seventh grade chased them away, gave me my pants, and asked where I lived. Quickly I put my pants back on. Then he took my hand and walked me all the way home.

In those days, the movies were silent. There was plenty of action, just no sound. I loved to watch the old cowboy and Indian movies. I thought that if I was ever in a movie and that seventh grade boy had an arrow flying towards him, I would jump in front of the arrow and save his life, like he had saved mine. It would be the only fair thing to do. He didn't see a skinny, pigeon-toed, knock-kneed, bow-legged, dark-skinned boy. All he saw was a little kid who was in trouble and he helped me.

Sticks and stones will break your bones and names will definitely hurt you, but it is sure nice to have a friend there to help you when you need one.

Questions a teacher or mentor should ask a student:

1. Why do some people say mean things about others?

2. Describe how someone's hurtful words or behaviors have affected your thoughts or emotions.

3. Why is it good to talk to someone about your problems?

4. Does everyone get bullied at some point in his or her life and is everyone a bully at some time in their life?

5. List some examples of bullying that you have experienced in your life. How did they affect you?

Students - Talk to your parents or mentors about the following:

1. Did they ever have a hero? Who and why?

2. Were they ever bullied when they were a kid? What did they do about it?

3. Who do they go to when they need someone to talk to?

Chapter 3 – Prison Sentence—Prisoner of the Truck



Photo courtesy of Wegmans Supermarket

Around the age of eight, at the end of the second grade and the start of summer, things got worse for me. After school let out, my father said to my mother, “Frances, I’m taking Freddie with me on the truck today.”

As I stood there in shock with my mouth gaping open, my mother responded, “Isn’t he too young? He’s only eight years old.”

My father said, “No, I need him.”

And that was it. Back in those days, when your father spoke, you listened. Even if you didn’t agree with him or like what he said, you had to do whatever he wanted, no matter what. It was as simple as that. So, on the very first day of my summer vacation, my mother shook me awake at four o’clock in the morning. She gently whispered in my ear, “I’m sorry, dear. You must get up to work with your father today.”

After a quick breakfast of eggs and toast, I climbed up into the front seat of his old Ford truck and we headed off to the public market where we arrived at 5:00 A.M. I stayed in the truck cab and waited for him to purchase the day’s fruits and vegetables. I so wanted to lay my head down on the seat and go back to sleep, but there were so many things of interest. I could hear all of the farmers and buyers talking back and forth about the Depression, the weather, and how the Yankees were doing. I could see all of the apples, oranges, potatoes, radishes, lettuce, and tomatoes. There were food items there that I had never seen before. I could smell the onions, cantaloupes, and freshly picked strawberries. My father did not finish selecting his produce until about 8:00 A.M. The farmers’ helpers would carry bushels of fruits and vegetables over to the platform behind his truck. When my father was ready, I helped hand them up to him. He knew how to angle the fruits and vegetables so that his customers could easily see them all and select them right from the curbstone in front of their homes. It was beautiful, every

pepper and banana in its place. Not a lime out of line. It was like a mini-Wegmans supermarket grocery department.

There were about fifty other fruit and vegetable dealers at the public market all doing the same thing. The salesmen were actually called hucksters. I noticed that very few of the hucksters had helpers and if they did, they were grown boys or men. I wasn't that helpful. The little things that my father had me do he could have done himself, probably better and quicker.

We would arrive at our first customer about 8:30 in the morning. My father would park the truck at the perfect angle. Then the lady of the house would mosey out to the curb and select the fruits, vegetables, and eggs that she needed for the next few days. Near the back of the truck hung a large metal scale that my father used for weighing the various items. He also had a black leather strap slung over his shoulder. Fastened to it was a big leather purse. The purse held paper money and coins to make change for the ladies as they bought my father's wares. There were no checks or credit cards in those days. Almost everything was paid for in cash when I was a boy. I would carry the baskets of fruits and vegetables into the houses for the ladies. My father would sit in the truck while he waited for me to come back with the empty baskets. Then my father would hop out with his hand crank, give the old Ford a few cranks to get it started, and off we'd go to the next street, the next house, and the next customer.

The lady customers were much larger and stronger than I was. I'm sure they could have easily carried the baskets of fruits and vegetables themselves. Or, if my father wanted to give extra service, he could have carried the baskets in for them, instead of waiting in the truck, but he didn't. Even so, I did not feel very useful. I wondered why my father wanted me on the truck with him. We didn't talk all that much and I sure didn't do all that much. There were hundreds of other ways I would have preferred to spend my summer vacation, instead of being on that truck.

I especially hated summer Saturdays, because after a long day's work, my father would stop at Hedges Bar and Grill on the corner of Leo Street and Joseph Avenue, in the inner city of Rochester. He told me that he had to sell the leftover fruits and vegetables at Hedges because they would spoil by Monday. He said that some of the guys in the bar would take the fruits and vegetables home to their wives as a peace offering. That way they wouldn't holler at them for spending so much time in the bar. Every Saturday night during the summer, I had to watch the truck to make sure that no one stole anything from it while my father was in the bar. We usually didn't get home from Hedges Bar and Grill until about eleven o'clock at night. So, for every Saturday of that whole summer, I was either on that truck, in that truck, or around that truck for nineteen hours straight.

Workdays were longer during the summer because the sun gets up earlier then and it goes down later. During those long and hot Rochester summers, my father and I often put in over a hundred hours each per week. Driving around the city all day and watching other kids play made me sad and angry. How could any eight-year-old boy be happy on that truck when the whole world was having fun without him? That old truck felt like a prison to me, and my father was the warden. I had no freedom, no fun, and no time to play like all of those other children. I hated my prison, and I wondered why the loving and caring God I had learned about in church would ever let something like this happen to a little kid like me. I wondered why my mother allowed this to happen to me. I wondered if I would ever find a way to escape from being the Prisoner of the Truck. I had very few real conversations with my father.

Usually he just told me what to do, and I'd say, "Yes Pa."

"Freddie, get those potatoes up into the truck."

"Yes Pa."

"Freddie, help Mrs. McGregor with those baskets of grapes."

"Yes Pa."

I obeyed every order that he gave me, just like a prisoner who does whatever the warden says.

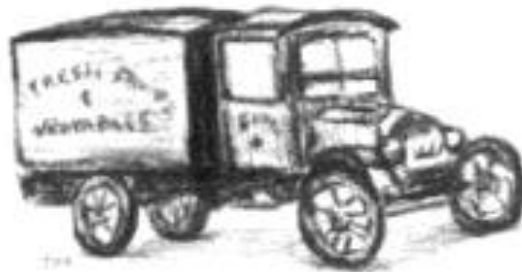
"Yes Pa."

The summer was almost over, the Genesee River was getting low, and I was finally getting away from that truck. Most kids were complaining about going back to school, but not me. Even then, in those early years, I did not do well in school. I hated homework and I seldom studied. For me though, getting out of school at the end of the day was like being out on parole. I was free, free to run and play with my friends, free to laugh, free to be a kid again!

Back at school, things were pretty much the same. The kids at Holy Rosary did not like me any better than they did before. There still weren't any dark-skinned children like me to pal around with. I still got picked on, I still got bullied, and I was still known as that skinny, pigeon-toed, knock-kneed, bow-legged kid with dark skin. I endured the numbing lessons of my teacher, Sister Regina Stella, while I daydreamed of the laughter and the late afternoon ball games with my buddies from the public school. Several of my friends from the public school had dark skin, just like me, and I so wanted them to come to school with me, or for me to go to school with them. But, my parents wanted me to learn about God and Jesus. I did love hearing the stories about the life and ways of the man named Jesus. I learned about all of

the times he suffered and died for all people—people just like me. After I thought about it for a while, I figured that maybe since he had suffered so much for me, I needed to suffer a little for him, and that's why I needed to be on that truck.

Later that same year, as the snow squalls began to fly in the gray skies of Rochester, I got my second shock. Still eight years old, I had to go to work on my father's truck every Saturday in the fall, winter, and spring during school-time. He had hired a carpenter to add wooden sides and a cover to the back of the old delivery truck. Now the fruits and vegetables would be protected from the elements and he could sell his produce year-round. The box was made of sturdy hemlock and there were no windows, only a large swinging door on the back. My father kept that old kerosene lamp that radiated heat in the back of the truck.



The winterized truck

The driver's section was separated from the back of the truck.
There was a small swinging door in the back.

At 4:00 A.M., one Saturday morning in February, my mother carried the milk in from the milk box and noticed that it had frozen. The frozen milk had expanded and pushed its way up about an inch out of the quart bottle. I knew it was especially cold that day. My mother said to my father,

“Do you have to take Freddie with you today? It's freezing outside, and he's just an eight-year-old boy.”

I waited for his reply, hoping that at least for one winter Saturday, I could stay home in our warm comfortable house instead of going with Pa on his daily frozen journey. As always, my father simply said, “No, I need him on the truck.”

As always, whatever my father said, I had to do, without questioning or complaining.

There was no heater in the front cab of the truck. The only means of light and heat in the back of the truck was the trusty old kerosene lantern. Before we left every morning, I would refill the small storage tank on the

bottom of the lantern with kerosene, clean the globe, trim the wick if it needed it, and then light it again. One fill would last all day.

As I sat up front with my father on the way to the public market, I could look down through the cracks between the floorboards and see the snow and frozen ice on the road below. Icy shafts of frozen air would shoot up through the cracks, slowly numbing my body from the outside in.



The cab section of the truck

My hands and feet would feel like they were frozen solid. I couldn't wait until we finally made it to the public market. I wanted to hop up into the back of that truck, huddle next to the kerosene lamp, and start the long, slow process of thawing-out my frostbitten fingers and toes. My husky father did not seem to mind the cold weather. On several occasions, he asked me if I wore my long underwear and every time I shivered, "Yes Pa, I did." My mother always made sure I was dressed as warmly as possible.

On that bitter cold Saturday morning, at the public market, while my father shopped for fruits and vegetables, I remained in the back of that truck for three long hours, from about 5:00 A.M. to 8:00 A.M. The unlocked back door would open from time to time and the farmer's helpers would slide the bushel and peck baskets of fruits and vegetables into the back of the truck. When my father had finished selecting his produce for the day, I hopped out, giving him the space he needed to arrange the day's purchases for the waiting customers.

My father was fussy about the way he arranged the fruits and vegetables, so I just waited outside the truck, hands jammed deep inside my

coat pockets. When he was finished, you could stand in the middle of the back of the small truck and look at a display of fresh fruits and vegetables on either side. It looked like something out of a magazine. When he was finished, I would get in the back of the truck and huddle up next to the kerosene lamp as the old truck was put into gear and we chugged forward.

Before we called on our first customer, my father stopped at the public market restaurant. Even though the truck could be locked in the winter, he never took me in that restaurant. He was in there for about an hour. I waited patiently, then impatiently, in the back of the cold truck. The kerosene lantern gave just enough heat to keep the produce and me from freezing to death. Although I could eat a banana or cold apple, I yearned for a hot cup of milk as I shivered, hummed a little tune, and prayed, but my father never brought me anything hot to drink.

Once we got going, the day passed rather quickly. Sacks of potatoes, bunches of carrots, and heavy heads of cabbage disappeared from the back of the truck. I carried baskets of turnips, apples, and rutabagas up slippery walkways and steps to countless German, Irish, Italian, Polish, and Scottish housewives. Finally, about 6:30 P.M., we called on our last housewife.

Because it was a frigid night, I hoped that my father would go straight home to our warm house. He slid into the driver's side. I crawled in on the other side. I closed my eyes and prayed we'd go home. I could feel the truck round the corner, tilt to one side a bit and slow down. I could hear the soft squeal of the brakes, the clutch disengaging the gears, and the engine coughing to a stop.



Inside the closed truck

Without even opening my eyes, I knew where we were again—Hedges Bar and Grill. Again, my father opened the back of the truck. I got in. There was only one place for me to go...like always...into the back of the truck, into the box, into the prison with no windows. I stepped up into my dimly lit cell that frigid night and sadly huddled around the glowing lantern.

I heard the heavy back door creak, then close. The all too familiar sound of the closing padlock and the abating crunch of frozen snow echoed through my brain. I was a prisoner of the truck and my father was the warden. I was only eight years old, I had just worked for fourteen hours in freezing conditions, and now I was being locked in an icy prison for another four hours. Tears of sadness and hatred dripped off my cheeks and hissed as they splattered on the mantel of the lantern. Maybe my father thought he was protecting his son from the harsh realities of the world. Or, maybe he didn't want me to see what he was doing for four hours, every Saturday night at Hedges Bar and Grill. But I never questioned my father. My father was the leader of our family and his words were always final. Even my mother knew there was no reasoning with him. You had to obey his laws or suffer the consequences. After all, I was only eight years old.

At least I was never hungry. My dinner was all around me. I had a pocketknife, a nice sharp Barlow, with a smooth wooden handle. I would peel a potato and eat it raw. They tasted rather bland, but had a nice crunch to them. I had nothing else to do but try different types of vegetables. I ate green peas, pod and all. I dined on green beans, beets, parsnips, and turnips—all raw. I saved the fruit for my dessert.

I also had two of the milkman's glass quart bottles with me. One held a quart of water for drinking and the empty one I used to urinate in. With the kerosene lamp flickering inside that cold dark truck, I sat on an orange crate with my back up against a sack of potatoes, huddled next to the kerosene lamp, cold and lonely for four hours. I dreamed about the hot roast beef sandwich with steaming mashed potatoes, smothered with thick gravy, he *once* treated me to at lunch in a restaurant.

I was cold and lonely, all by myself, in the back of that truck. My hanky—or snot rag, as it was called in those days—was wet from my runny nose and tears. If I left the hanky outside of my pocket, it would freeze as stiff as a board. My only comfort came from a strong belief that God was in that Prison-Truck with me. I didn't know what it was, but I knew that God had a special plan for my life. I prayed for patience, and I prayed that God would help me find a way to escape my father's prison. I also knew there were kids in Africa that were starving to death. At least my prison was full of fresh food for me to eat whenever I wanted. That was some relief, but it was still a prison.

About once every hour, my warden-father would unlock the back of the truck and take a variety of fruits and vegetables back into the bar. He

seemed to be very tired and often in a daze. He did not talk to me. He didn't even seem to see me. He never said,

“Thank you, Fred, for being so patient.”

He never gave me a hug; he never did. Yet my heart went out to him. I thought he was a tired man. I felt sorry for him and that he had to work one hundred hours a week all year long, just to support our family and me. At least I could get away from my prison during school days.

I knew the long workday had finally come to an end when I heard the old truck start. On the way home, I stayed locked in the back of the truck. We usually got home after 11:00 P.M. My loneliness and sadness would finally end as I entered the warmth of our house.

I looked forward to Sundays, to church, and to the joy of family and friends. On Sundays, my father was no longer my warden. He was my father, and there was no man more full of pride, when his children piled out of the back of that truck, right there in front of St. Nicholas Church, on the corner of Leo Street and Remington Street in Rochester, New York. He wore his only suit and shiny black shoes as he stood erect and smiling. Other parishioners would watch with amusement as my mother opened the cab door with a baby in her arms. They would smile as the other children, one by one, stepped down from the back of that enclosed truck and entered the church. As my father would often say,

“A rich man has his wealth. I have my family, and there lies my true wealth.”

And that is why on Sundays, my father stood so tall and so proud. And that is why on Sundays, I was so very proud of my father.

Questions a teacher or mentor should ask a student:

1. Why do you think Fred's father took him to work on the truck? Should Fred have questioned his father about this?

2. Compare and contrast a typical summer day in your life with Fred's.

3. Was Fred's father being mean to him or trying to protect him, by locking him in the back of the truck? Explain.

Students - Talk to your parents or mentors about the following:

1. Why is it important for family members to express their love and appreciation for each other?

2. What kind of chores or jobs should kids do in their family without expecting to get paid for them? For what kinds of work might it be fair and reasonable for parents to pay kids?

3. Do your parents or your mentor feel that they were taken advantage of in any way?

4. What do your parents or mentor do that make you proud of them?

5. What do you do that makes them proud of you?

Chapter 4 - At Age Twelve— Three 5-Minute Lessons of a Lifetime



My grandson, Zach, posed for the artist who drew the cover of *Yes Pa*

I was on the Prison-Truck from the time I was eight years old, until I was fourteen. Between the ages of six and eleven, I did not like who I was. I was a sad and lonely young boy. I often felt sorry for myself. I was drowning in self-pity. My father and I rarely spoke and I still answered most of his questions with “Yes Pa.”

I turned twelve in May of 1938. That summer, I began to serve the fourth year of what seemed like a life-sentence as a Prisoner of the Truck. I still worked the grueling one hundred hour weeks. I still got home around 8:00 P.M. Monday through Friday, and I still was in “lock-down” until 11:00 P.M. every Saturday night. More than anything else in the world, I dreaded and hated those cold, lonely winter Saturday nights, locked in the back of that Prison-Truck.

One sunny August morning during the summer of ‘38, when I was twelve, my warden was trimming his vegetables at the public market like he always did. All of the hucksters did the same thing. They would pull off any wilted outer leaves from the heads of lettuce and cabbage. They would trim the tops of celery. They would cut off the roots of beets, carrots and radishes. They would sort out any damaged or spoiled fruit. All of the trimmings and bad produce were thrown into the gutter along the street and the clean up crews would come through around 9:00 A.M. and start cleaning up the mess. All of the hucksters paid rent for the space where they parked their trucks or wagons. They were allowed to be there from five in the morning until noon. That particular morning, my father had purchased all of his fruits and vegetables for the day, trimmed them, and arranged them in the back of the truck. Then he told me that he was going over to the public market restaurant

for a few minutes. Naturally I had to be the watchman for the open truck. He finally sauntered back across the parking lot at about 9:30 A.M. The clean-up crews were already busy with their brooms, rakes, and shovels. All of a sudden, the market master came up beside me but headed straight towards my father. He said, "Hey buddy, you're holding up my cleaning crew. Why can't you get out of here on time like all of the other hucksters?"

My father-warden got hopping mad. He said, "First of all, I'm not your buddy, and second, I rent this stall from five 'till noon, so don't bother me."

The market master puffed out his chest and sided over to my father, pointed a stubby finger in his face and said, "You foreigners are all alike. You come to America and the first thing you know, you act like you own the country."

My husky and surprisingly strong, forty-four year-old warden-father wrestled the market master down into the gutter. Then he rubbed his face in the rotten fruits and vegetables along side the curbstone. My eyes were as big as saucers and my mouth gaped open. In my father's broken English he yelled, "Don't cha' ever call me a foreigner again! I am a citizen of the United States of America and I'm darned proud of it! Don't chu ever forget it, buddy!"

The market master's face turned as white as a ghost. He clambered to his feet, wiped off his face, and ran off towards the restaurant. He acted like he thought my father was going to kill him. I thought for sure he was running over to the restaurant to report my father to the police. The police did not come that morning, and the market master never bothered my father again. Although I was a little afraid that my father was going to seriously hurt or kill the market master, I was kind of proud of the fact that my dad could whoop the pants off the market master, but more than that—he was so proud to be an American.

Later that same summer, he again showed his physical strength. It was early one warm August morning. The truck was looking good and ready for our first customer, but my father drove the short distance over to the market restaurant. I waited for him in the truck for about an hour, like I always did after he went inside. All of a sudden, I heard a loud commotion at the front door of the restaurant. I heard the owner screaming,

"Mike, what do you think you're doing?"

My father was dragging a large and heavy pinball machine through the front door of the restaurant. He yelled back that he was loading it into the truck. Of course, I don't know where he would have put it because the back of the truck was piled high with fruits and vegetables for the day's run. The owner yelled again,

"You can't do that Mike. Are you out of your mind?" (Mike was the nickname he'd been given, even though his real first name was Wady.)

My warden-father, whose face was flushed red with anger, yelled back, "I paid for it, so I'm taking it."

A policeman did show up that time. The officer calmed my father down, while the owner and his helper hauled the heavy pinball machine back into the restaurant. I couldn't understand what had just happened. Why would my father buy a pinball machine? I wondered if playing a coin-operated pinball machine was a bad behavior that he did not want me to see. Or maybe it was something to do with putting lots of money in the machine and not winning anything. I wondered if this was why he would not let me join him in the restaurant for some hot chocolate and a donut. I bet it was.

In that summer of 1938, when I was twelve, there were three major encounters or lessons with my warden-father that would change my life forever. Each one was about five minutes in length.

First Lesson

The first lesson came early in the summer and just after school was out. At this point in my life, there were seven children in our family. It was the strawberry season and my father wanted to make a few extra dollars for his growing family. During the three-week strawberry season, he would buy several crates of strawberries at the public market. Along with me, he would also bring my eight-year old brother Joe on the truck, to help sell strawberries, after taking care of the regular customers.

Around seven o'clock in the evening, we would begin on a narrow street in downtown Rochester. Joe and I were given two baskets, a basket to carry in each hand. In each basket, we would place three smaller quart baskets of strawberries. My father told me to cover one side of the street, while Joe covered the other side. As we rang doorbells or knocked on doors, my father would drive his truck ever so slowly, slightly ahead of us, yelling over and over, "Berries, berries, homegrown strawberries."

He wasn't yelling like he would when he was mad. He kind of chanted and half sang his song to the would-be buyers. In my mind I can still smell those luscious ripe strawberries and hear his strong voice filling the air as it drifted between the rows of houses, through the front screen doors, on these warm summer evenings. That particular evening, after calling on about 30 homes, I came back to the truck to get six more boxes of strawberries. My warden's voice was gruff and angry. He said, "Fred, where have you been? You must be doing something wrong? What are you, dumb?"

I said, "What do you mean, Pa?"

He said, "Your brother is only eight years old and you are twelve, yet he comes back to the truck for more strawberries four times to your one. What are ya doin' wrong?"

Only a few months before the strawberry season, I had received Confirmation in the Catholic Church. This meant that I was supposed to receive the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. One of those gifts was fortitude, or courage. I had learned that it was courage that made it possible for the twelve disciples to spread Christianity throughout the world. I wanted to show courage and this was my chance, so in the strongest voice I could muster up, I said, "Maybe it's because he has the better side of the street!"

My father snorted, "No Ba, you are doing something wrong. I am going to watch you." ("Ba," even though it meant "father" in Arabic, was a slang term used by many Lebanese fathers when they were talking to any of their children, or even when you talked to them.)

I wanted the world to open up and swallow me. My warden had ordered me around for four years. He got me up at four in the morning. He made me a prisoner for one hundred hours a week. He made me sit in the back of that Prison-Truck until all hours of the night, even during the winter. All I ever did was obey him. All I ever did was say "Yes Pa," and now, with his foreign accent, he was going to humiliate me in front of a housewife by standing over me to make sure I was selling strawberries the correct way. I was bitter and angry. I felt like a slave, but I had no choice. I went to the next house while he stood directly behind me. I knocked on the door. The lady of the house finally appeared at the screen door and she said, "Good evening young lad, and what might you have there?"

With drooping arms, I held the two flats of berries. Knowing she probably didn't want to buy any strawberries anyway, with a doubtful look in my eyes, and my head shaking a "no," I mumbled, "You probably don't want to buy any strawberries, do you ma'am?"

As I was shaking my head no, the old lady, looking puzzled at my warden behind me, started shaking her head no and said, "I guess not today sonny."

After all, I thought, if she wanted the strawberries she would have asked how much they cost. And if she thought the price was fair, she would have bought the amount she wanted, right?

I was glad my father did not embarrass me in front of the lady. He walked me back to the truck and said, "Do you want to get home early or stay out here all night?"

As always, I said, “Yes Pa, I want to go home early.”

He said, “We will go home when we sell all of these strawberries. You are so dumb. There is a smart way to sell strawberries and your way. I will show you the smart way. Are you ready to learn Ba?”

I said, “Yes Pa.”

He took the two flats of berries out of my hands and walked up to the next house. He gently placed the two flats of strawberries on the porch floor and selected the quart basket with the reddest, plumpest berries in it. Then he brushed off his pants, stood erect, put a big old smile on his tired face and rang the doorbell. He was ready for the lady of the house. After a few seconds, a rather robust woman appeared at the door.

My father said, “Good evening, ma’am. These strawberries were picked early this morning on a farm not far from here, in Webster, New York.”

As he held the quart of strawberries closer to the lady’s face, he said, “Look. See how fresh they are.”

Then he shifted his body and turned the basket so the lady could see that there were no bad berries at the bottom. Then he said, with excitement in his voice, “You see, there is not one bad berry in the whole quart. No mold. No green berries. No bad ones.”

With a Cheshire-cat smile on his face, he said, “They are only ten cents a quart or three quarts for a quarter. Do you want one or three, ma’am?”



The lady only had a choice between one and three, not yes or no. To my utter amazement, she said, “I’ll take three, sir.”

As we descended the porch steps, my father said, “Now, do you think I was just lucky or that it’s the right side of the street?”

I thought maybe it was just luck, but I just said, “I don’t know!”

“Okay,” he said, “We’ll try the next house.”

He gave the same happy sales pitch to the next lady and she, too, took three. “Now,” he said in a stern voice, “Do this from now on, and we’ll go home a lot sooner. Do you hear me, Ba?”

“Yes Pa,” I said.

Instantaneously, I became a believer in the delivery. I practiced and perfected the new skill I had just learned. Even though my little brother was naturally outward going and I was inherently shy, I quickly learned the art of selling strawberries the smart way, not the dumb way. I caught up with and surpassed the strawberry sales of my little brother, Joe. This first five-minute lesson from my warden had a big impact on the rest of my life. It changed my attitude from negative to positive. I immediately stopped being shy and timid. I became friendlier and happier. Those ladies were buying fruits and vegetables from a young boy who showed enthusiasm and excitement for life and the product he was selling. Consequently, they did not see a skinny misfit with pigeon toes, bowed-legs, knock-knees and dark skin. They saw the shining personality of a boy who believed in himself and the product he was selling. And it wasn’t just a sham or a con job. The fruits and vegetables that my father and I sold were some of the best in Rochester. I was a good boy, hardworking, and a darned good salesman. From that day forward, I tried to remember and incorporate that life lesson into everything I did or said. I was grateful to my father for that five-minute lesson that would change my outlook on life forever.

I even thought back to my first grade teacher, Sister Theonilla, and all the kids in my class. Maybe if I had been more positive and outward going, I would have made more friends. Maybe if I let the light of my enthusiasm shine, I would have received as many valentines as my classmates. Maybe those girls wouldn’t have called me those names that hurt me so deeply. Maybe if I was friendlier and smiled a lot, I wouldn’t have felt so lonely and dejected. Maybe! Maybe!

It’s almost like we all have this invisible control panel on the side of our body that controls our attitude and enthusiasm. And there’s a knob that you can turn to low, medium, or high. I know it’s not scientific, but I have seen many people with their attitude knobs set at different levels. I also know that people can choose to move that knob; they can change their outlook on life. From that day on, I realized that I was in control of my attitude and enthusiasm, and I could turn my knob as high as I chose to.

Second Lesson

During that same summer and shortly after the strawberry lesson, my father had another little chat with me—my second lesson. Like the previous lesson, this one involved the way I was doing my job. I had just completed delivering two large baskets of fruits and vegetables to a customer who lived on the third floor of an old apartment building over on East Avenue, and

there wasn't an elevator. When I got back into the truck, I hopped back up into the cab next to my warden-father. He looked at me with a puzzled look on his face and said, "Where are the empty baskets?"

Knowing that we called on this particular customer every other day, I sheepishly said, "I forgot them. I'll pick them up day after tomorrow, okay?"

In a stern voice, he sharply replied, "No, you go get them now. They are worth five cents each."

At that moment, I again thought of the gift of courage—one of the gifts I was supposed to receive when I received the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation in our church.

I also knew that I was hot and tired. No way did I want to trudge all the way back up those three flights of stairs for two lousy baskets. I wondered if and when I would ever be able to use that gift of courage when talking to my warden. I thought,

I'm twelve years old. Do I speak up, or as always, just obey by saying, "Yes Pa?"

I thought, "This is the time. I will speak up." In a soft but positive tone of voice, I replied, "Pa, you don't pay me a nickel for my work. Instead, you let me keep the empty baskets. I sell about 120 baskets a week back to the farmers for five cents each. That's \$6.00, and I give \$5.80 to mom to buy whatever she needs for the house. I only keep twenty cents a week for myself.⁽¹⁾ Since the baskets are mine, why can't I make the decision to pick them up day after tomorrow?"

My warden-father never expected this answer from his normally quiet son. His face turned beet-red with anger. He pounded his fist on the steering wheel of the truck and screamed, "No, go get them now! I don't care whose baskets they are! They are worth five cents each! Day after tomorrow you may forget to pick them up! Do you hear me? Get them now!"

There was a bit of anger in my voice as I sarcastically said, "Yes Pa."

⁽¹⁾ (In 1938, postage stamps were three cents each, a pound loaf of bread cost eight cents, milk was fourteen cents a quart, gasoline was nineteen cents a gallon, an average house cost \$7,000, a movie was ten cents, and a trolley ride was ten cents round trip. The minimum wage was thirty cents per hour. Candy bars were five cents each. Gum was a penny and a Coke was a nickel. So, in those days, the \$5.80 I gave my mom bought a lot of essential needs for our home.)

I ran all the way back up those stairs to the third floor and politely asked the customer for the empty baskets. She apologetically handed them back to me, and I rushed back down the stairway to the Truck-Prison without bars. By then, I was burning up inside. I threw the two baskets in the back of the truck, opened the cab door, hesitated, swallowed hard, and with all the strength I could muster, slammed the truck door shut. I sat in rigid silence, fearing a tongue-lashing or worse from my warden-father. After all, this was the first time I had ever stood up to him or challenged him during my four-year sentence on the Prison-Truck.

To my surprise he stared straight ahead, started the truck, and without saying a word headed down the street. My fists were still clenched in rage. I was so angry with him for always controlling my life. But, by slamming that truck door, I had dared to use one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit against my warden—the gift of courage. I had not only openly defied my father, but I had made a statement. I had finally made a stand.

As my warden drove the modest distance to his next customer, he remained absolutely silent. Did he sense my anger? Did he choose to ignore it? Was he aware of what being on that truck was doing to me? Was he pleased that his son had shown some courage? Did he care?

As we turned onto Jay Street, he finally broke the silence. In a surprisingly calm and quiet voice, he said, "You really hate this work, don't you, Freddie?" (He used my name instead of Ba.)

This was my opening, this was my opportunity. This was my chance to use another gift of the Holy Spirit—the gift of counsel. Counsel meant opening up and talking to each other, something that seldom occurred. This was the first time that he ever gave me a chance to say how I felt. I could not lie. He never missed church on Sunday. He always wanted his son to be truthful. I gritted my teeth and all of the anger, frustration, pain, and rage, erupted from deep within me, and I shouted at the top of my lungs, "YES, I HATE THIS WORK!"

He then calmly asked, "How would you like to be a huckster like me for the rest of your life?"

At age twelve, during the four agonizing years together on that Prison-Truck, I had never raised my voice in anger to my father. Finally, this was my chance to let him know how I felt, how much I hated being a Prisoner of the Truck. I shocked myself as the words shot out of my mouth: "I WOULD RATHER DIE!"

I did say those exact words, but I didn't really mean them. I knew that it would not please God or anyone in my family if I did something stupid to hurt myself. I knew it would break my mother's heart if anything ever happened to me. I knew my mother, father, sisters, and brothers would have

to live with that pain for the rest of their lives. I also knew that no matter how upset I was, I still loved my family and would not want to die.

Again in a quiet and calm voice, my warden-father said, "Why do you think I do this work?"

I didn't expect a question. I was anticipating a long, stern lecture and I wondered where our conversation was headed. I gritted my teeth and yelled, "I don't know why you do it."

As he gripped the wheel of the Prison-Truck and turned onto Clinton Avenue, again in a calm voice, he said,

"Well, let me tell you. I am a huckster of fruits and vegetables because I do not have an education. This is the best job I can get. I watch you on this truck. You always have a long face when you're waiting for me. I never see you smile. I don't even know if you have teeth. I am tired of seeing you so sad and angry. You should bring your books and your Bible with you. You could study on the truck. You are not that busy and you have a lot of free time. During the summer, you can study during the day while I am waiting on customers. You can study under the streetlights while I am calling on the men at Hedges. In the winter, you can study by the light of the kerosene lamp in the back of the truck. Abraham Lincoln used to study and read at night using candles and kerosene lamps, and he became President of the United States. If you don't want to be a huckster for the rest of your life, you have to study. You need an education to succeed in life. Do you hear me, Ba?"

My heart went out to my father, my warden, my boss, my teacher. I suddenly realized that he was a lifetime Prisoner of the Truck. There was no escape for him. He did not have an education and it was basically too late for him to get one. He wanted more for me. He really did love me. He was showing me a way to escape from the Truck-Prison. My anger quickly subsided. With a calm, determined, and sympathetic tone in my voice, I said, "Yes Pa, I hear you."

A few moments later we pulled up to the next customer's house, and there ended the second most important five-minute conversation of my life. On that day, I made the biggest decision of my young life. If I continued to think of myself as a Prisoner of the Truck, or a prisoner of an unhappy life, or a prisoner of a country that forced me to go to school every day, or a prisoner of self-pity, I would be miserable and unhappy for the rest of my life. I would amount to nothing. I decided that I would take my father's advice. I would study on the Prison-Truck, whenever I could.

At age twelve, this short but powerful lesson from my Pa changed my life. By speaking up for the first time in four years on my Prison-Trust, my father saw me in a different light, and he liked what he saw and heard.

Then, in an honest and simple way, he opened his mind and heart to me. In those few minutes, we shared deep feelings. In doing this, it inspired me to change my attitude—to study in those many idle hours on the truck. He caused me to pursue excellence in education. In turn, I felt compassion for his life and his struggle. I realized that his education was limited to schooling in Lebanon, which was in Arabic. I knew now that my Pa wanted the best for me.

During church, I had learned how Jesus encouraged his disciples to be positive instead of negative. They were skeptical and afraid, but they took His advice and told people everywhere about His teachings. Nearly 2,000 years later, Christianity is a foundational religion that has spread throughout the world. Like the disciples, I changed from being shy and timid to being enthusiastic and unafraid in everything I did and said. In addition to courage, two more gifts of the Holy Spirit were also beginning to work in my life—the gift of understanding and the gift of some wisdom.

Third Lesson

There was a third memorable lesson I learned from my warden-father. With my change in attitude, I became a better listener. One spring Saturday, on a five-minute drive to another customer, my father said,

“Fred, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays we call on the same customers on the west side of the Genesee River, and on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays we call on the same customers on the east side of the river. Do you ever wonder why I never lose a customer?”

Curious about this, and eager for his answer, I replied, “Yes Pa?”

With the same soft tone he said, “Fred, do you know what the Golden Rule is?”

I said, “Yes Pa; I learned it in school.”

He said, “OK, tell me.”

I said, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Somewhat surprised and pleased and with a big smile on his face, he said,

“Good boy! Now listen, Fred. Every day, I try to live by the Golden Rule. First, when I shop the farmers in the public market, I look for the best produce and I try to buy for the lowest possible price. I treat all my customers the way I would want to be treated if I were in their shoes. I am honest with every one of them. I do not overcharge. I have the same fair price

for all. I tell every customer the truth. It makes my life so simple because I don't have to remember what I said before. Sometimes I make a mistake, but that is not a lie. And when I make a mistake, I tell my customer that I made a mistake and I make it right by the customer by giving a credit or a free vegetable or free fruit. I make sure that my scale is accurate. When I weigh my vegetables, I always give them an honest count and even a bit extra. That way, my customer is happy with me, and that is why I don't lose customers. That is also why my customers help me to get new customers, because they like my quality, my service, my fair price, and my honesty."

He took a puff from the stub of a cigar he was smoking and continued,

"So, Fred, when you get older, remember to be fair and honest. Whether you go into business, work for someone, or work in government, do not lie. Do not steal. Do not cheat. Have the courage to stand up for what you believe in. And if you make a mistake, don't hide it. Just say so, say you are sorry, and try to do better. Be the same in school, with your classmates, at home, when you have a girlfriend, when you get married, and when you have children. Fred, I promise you, you will be a happier and a more peaceful man if you do what I say. Also, with a good education and God's help, you will be successful in all of these things.

"And Fred, these things take time, and like baseball—lots of practice. Remember too, when a baseball player gets more than three hits out of ten times at bat, he is hero. Look at Babe Ruth. In his life, he averaged 3.4 hits out of ten. So, just like you learned selling strawberries, you are like a hero if you sell strawberries to three out of ten doors you knock on. You must work hard, practice, be patient, and if you lose, learn from it and try again. Do you agree?"

I was listening. I was learning. I said, "Yes Pa, I agree," and I meant it. I wanted to grow up to be that person.

At age twelve, I firmly believed that I was responsible for the course my life would take—my destiny. It wasn't my mother, father-warden, teachers, brothers, sisters, or friends who determined my future. They could advise, encourage, and assist, but it was really up to me. I firmly believed that if I studied hard, I could be anything I wanted to be in a country that I had read about so often, a country of freedom and opportunity.

These simple lessons in honesty, sincerity, enthusiasm, open communications, courage, perseverance, respect, and responsibility were forever implanted and engraved in my brain, heart, and soul.

At the age of twelve, I now had a strong belief that I could escape the prison of mediocrity. I learned the importance of speaking up openly and honestly. I would fight the good fight with enthusiasm. I would try to win

every battle fairly and squarely. I would be equipped to overcome every hardship in my life. I would confront any struggle or problem with the patience I learned on the Prison-Truck. I would turn each difficulty or hardship into a success story.

With God’s help, nothing was impossible. I would turn the Prison-Truck into the Learning-Truck, a safe place to read and study. While waiting for my father at the public market, while waiting for him to return from a customer, under the streetlights in front of Hedges Bar and Grill during the summer, and with the light of our trusty old kerosene lamp during in the winter, I would learn. I would become a disciple of good habits and self-discipline. And, like my warden-father said, if I am wrong, if I make a mistake, I will own up to it and apologize when and where I have to.

Sister Theonilla once said, “God will often speak to us through another person.”

In those three 5-minute talks with my warden-father, I have often thought that God spoke directly to me through him.

Questions a teacher or mentor should ask a student:

1. Was it okay for Fred’s father to try and take the pinball machine out of the bar? Explain. How did this event affect Fred?

2. Relate the “Strawberry Story” to a situation in your life, a time when enthusiasm and a positive attitude would have helped you perform a task more effectively.

3. How can a person's attitude be empowering or enslaving? Give an example from your own life, Fred's life, or the life of a literary character.

4. Why was the "Basket Story" important?

5. Does the Golden Rule have anything to do with happiness? Explain.

Students - Talk to your parents or mentors about the following:

1. What lessons did your parents or mentors learn from their parents?

2. What is something your parents or mentors did that they feel required courage?

3. What are three lessons about life that your parents or mentors want you to learn?

Chapter 5 - Keys to Freedom

That same year, when I was twelve, my father could not keep up with the payments to the bank on our house. He did not have the money for payments on our furniture either. We had to move to a poorly furnished Ormond Street home in the inner city of Rochester. My mother was very sad when we lost our beautiful home and nice furniture on 470 Driving Park Avenue. Right then and there, I made a resolution. I would apply the lessons I had learned on the Prison-Truck and I would become a success. Someday, somehow, I would buy my mother a nice house just like the one she lost.

Our new house in the inner city was half the size of our old one. All nine of us were crowded into a second floor apartment. Yet, when my mother saw how happy her children were in the new neighborhood, she was happy. No matter what kind of house she lived in, no matter how many hours she worked, if her kids were happy, she was happy. That was my mother. I loved her so much. I would have done anything to please her. She took the small flat that we moved into and made it a home. She got rid of the bed bugs in the old mattresses and the cockroaches that came out of the many cracks in the walls. She painted the walls, put up new curtains, and made that flat spic-and-span. She cared for us with patience, love, sacrifice, and a lot of hard work.

I loved the inner city of Rochester and the neighborhood around Ormond Street. The kids came from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. There were white kids, black kids, and dark-skinned kids, just like me. For once I fit in; I felt at home. I was a much happier and more confident boy, a boy with hope, a boy with a dream. I wanted to be the best at everything I did.

I loved the praise that I received from my teachers and my mom and dad for my better marks and for the gold stars on my report card. In the summer and winter, with my schoolbooks, library books, and my Bible as my companions, time on the truck seemed to pass more quickly than it did before. The cold didn't seem quite as cold and the hours didn't seem quite as long. I had my books, plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables to eat, and I had a plan. Finally, my life had a purpose. I stopped feeling lonely and sad. I didn't feel sorry for myself anymore. I thanked God for giving me a wonderful family and for helping me work out my problems.

From age six to eleven, I did not do well in school. They said I was a slow learner. I did not enjoy school and I did not care how I did. I didn't even like myself. I felt like a total loser. But, after those three 5-minute sessions with my father, I saw the light at the end of the tunnel. It all depended on where my focus and habits were—down into the darkness or up into the light. I knew from personal experience that a person could live for

years in a dark, oppressive environment, or a person could change his or her attitude and choose how to react to that environment. Praise God, I thought,

"I wasn't born to be a loser. I was born to be a chooser."

At age twelve, I chose to change my attitude from negative to positive. I chose to work hard at being a winner. Studying to me was like my warden-father said, like baseball—the more I practiced, the better I got.

Attending St. Joseph's Grammar School, I went from being a poor student to becoming one of the best. In a class of about thirty students, I had the second highest average in 7th grade and in 8th grade. While I was in 8th grade, I won a scholarship to the nearby St. Joseph's Business School on Franklin Street, right there in Rochester. I was fourteen years old. The business school taught shorthand, bookkeeping, typewriting, business English, business arithmetic, and business law.



Fred, lower left—8th grade graduation at St. Joseph's Grammar School in 1940

During my first year at St. Joseph's Business School, Sister Ludolph, the principal and my teacher, gave me an old typewriter. She could see how hungry I was to learn and excel. She knew that I wanted to find a quick way to make money so that I could help my parents. I learned to type so fast that I landed a job after school with two local businessmen. I made so much money and helped out so much with the family finances, that my father was only too happy to free me from the truck. Typing and shorthand were the keys to my freedom. I was so happy and proud to be getting an education, for having a job, and for being able to help my family out. I praised God and thanked him daily for helping me find the keys to my freedom. I no longer was a prisoner of the truck.

My mother was joyous and very relieved, now that there was extra money coming in. She could finally buy the things that she really needed for the house. It made me glow inside to see her smile and be happy again.

My father drafted my two younger brothers to help him on the truck. As helpers, Joe worked on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, while Jim worked on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. I didn't have to work on the truck at all anymore. I was free! My knowledge and hard work had set me free.

It was December 7, 1941, I was fifteen years old, and I was on the auditorium stage at Benjamin James High School in Rochester, New York. The Veterans of Foreign Wars had recently sponsored an essay contest. I wrote a draft, revised it, and typed it on that same old typewriter Sister Ludolpha had given me the year before. I was competing against all of the high school students in Monroe County, and believe it or not, I won—first place! A U.S. army general was there to present me with a gold medal from the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

All of a sudden, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a man in full army uniform rush onto the stage and give the general a telegram. The general opened it, quickly read it, and then looked up in shock. He got up from his chair, walked briskly over to the podium and read the telegram aloud to the crowd.

"On this day, December 7, 1941, the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor." He quickly left the stage.

The stunned audience gasped as the shock wave spread throughout the audience. After a few minutes, the general got everyone's attention and the ceremony continued.

The next morning, the headlines screamed in bold black print:

"JAPANESE ATTACK PEARL HARBOR!"

There were numerous articles that filled the newspaper, and in the very back section, there was a picture and a story about me receiving the gold medal for my winning essay.

One hot summer night after Pearl Harbor, when I was still fifteen, I kind of wished that I had a girlfriend. One evening as it started to get dark, my mother was ironing a pile of clothes for all of the family. That afternoon she had used her clothes pins to hang a big pile on a rope in the back yard. As she ironed, I said, "I'm gonna go and see my girlfriend."

My mother said, "Fred, you don't have a girlfriend."

I said, "Oh, yes I do."

My mother said, "What's her name?"

I thought quickly and said, "Her name is Mabel."

Then I went out the screen door. I just thought I'd tease my mother for a bit. I walked across St. Paul Street to the banks of the Genesee River. I sat there for about an hour or two enjoying the cool evening breeze. Then I returned home.

The kitchen was bright with light and my mother was still ironing. She looked so tired and sad. I think she was worried about me. She sensed that I was sad. She must have wondered if, indeed, I did have a girlfriend.

As I watched her ironing, I stood quietly at the screen door for about five minutes thinking about her workload from early in the morning until late at night. At that point, I had seven brothers and sisters. Including my Pa and me, that was a pile of laundry. My heart went out to her. I knocked on the screen door. She couldn't see who it was. She sweetly said, "Who is it?"

I opened the screen door and with a big smile on my face I said, "Hello, Mabel. *You* are my girlfriend!"

As I hugged my mom, her tears brought tears to my eyes. She was so happy. She told that story to everyone she could. For many years that followed, her relatives and friends would say, "Hello Mabel." My mom died at age 94, and she still had that nickname. I loved her so.

At age sixteen, I graduated from St. Joseph's Business School. I won the General Excellence Award because I had the highest average in every subject. I was number one in the entire school of seventy students. As valedictorian, I gave the customary graduation speech to all of my classmates, parents, friends, and teachers. I looked out at the audience. My father was beaming with pride. So was my mom. There were joyful tears in their eyes.

I thought back on my sixteen years of life. My father was my motivator, while my mother taught me love and patience. Both of my parents encouraged me to be the best I could be. I didn't need to take a course on how to succeed. I only had to be enthusiastic in everything I did. I had to take control of my life. I had to discipline myself to learn, to be patient, and to be cool when faced with a big problem. I had to fight for my convictions. I had to practice the art of selling products over and over again, as in the Strawberry Lesson. I had to take my Prison-Truck lessons of the past and apply them to the challenges of the present and the future. Above all, I had to continue to let my light shine brightly and let my enthusiasm show clearly.

After graduation, I immediately got a full time job with an area trucking company. I worked from 4:00 P.M. to midnight, six days a week. For forty-eight hours per week, all I did was type bills that the truck drivers took with them for their deliveries. Each bill showed who sent the package, who was supposed to receive it, and the cost of each package. I worked for the trucking company from age sixteen to eighteen. It was very boring and tedious work. On Friday and Saturday nights, while my teenage friends were out having fun, I was working. I didn't have any girlfriends. I didn't have time for them. But, I didn't feel sorry for myself because I was making a lot of money, and I had my dream to buy my mom and family a new house. I made five times the minimum wage of thirty cents per hour. (Today, the federal minimum wage is \$7.15.)

Except for my clothing, I spent very little on myself. I didn't have a car. I used the same trusty old bike that I rode back and forth to school, as my means of transportation to get back and forth to work.



Me, sister Betty, baby brother Ken, and my faithful bike that took me to school and my job

I was happy in knowing that I would soon reach my goal. Just before I turned eighteen, I bought my mom a beautiful home at 1293 Park Avenue in Rochester. It was very similar to the house on Driving Park Avenue that she had to give up six years before. There were now eight children in our family, and we were all very thankful for the extra room. The attic became

the bedrooms for my three brothers and me. My four sisters' and my parents' bedrooms were on the second floor. The spacious kitchen, living room, and dining room were located on the ground floor. There was a beautifully manicured back yard with a rock garden in the middle. A giant spreading maple tree stood guard at the front of the house.

My mother, father, sisters, and brothers were very proud of me. We were one big happy family. Everyone was happy, especially Mama, and when Mama was happy, I was happy. I did it! I had used the lessons my father had taught me, and my education, to achieve my goals and dreams. I felt like a king!

Questions a teacher or mentor should ask a student:

1. Was Fred better off in his old neighborhood or his new one? Explain.

2. How did Fred go from being a poor student to being a good one?

3. How did Fred finally earn his freedom from the truck?

Students - Talk to your parents or mentors about the following:

1. What subjects or activities did your parents or mentors do well in school?
What was hard for them?

2. Was there ever a time in your parents or mentors lives when they received recognition of praise for something they did well? Explain.

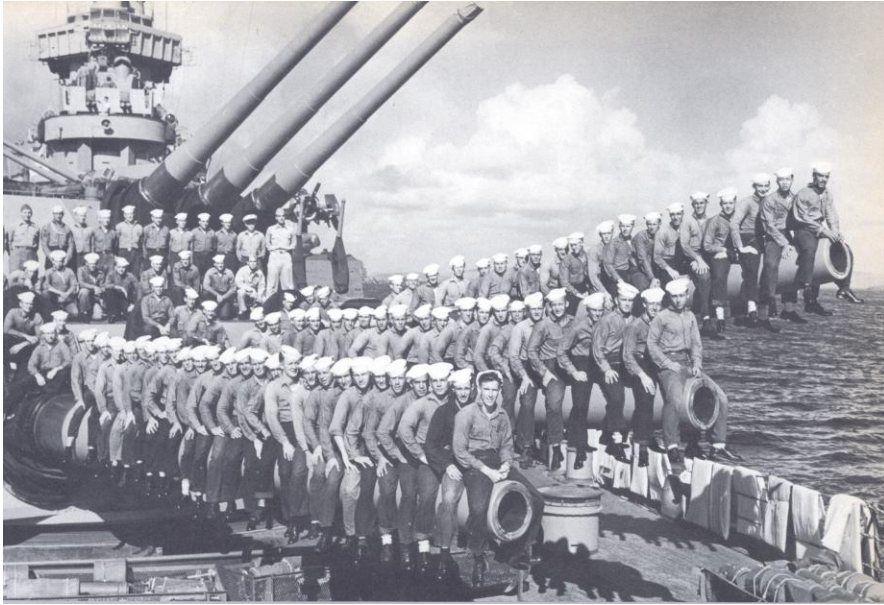
3. Should kids help parents with the costs of running a household? Other than money, what are some ways that kids can contribute to their family?

Chapter 6 - Commence Fire!

To avoid being drafted into the Army, at age eighteen, I enlisted in the Navy. I proved to the Navy that I was contributing more than fifty percent of the money that it took to support my eight brothers and sisters. My mother was also pregnant with her ninth child, so the Navy treated me as if I were a married man. They allowed me extra pay to continue helping to support the members of my family. My father's income was just not enough to make ends meet. He provided the meat, fruits, and vegetables for our table. My older sister Betty and I provided the rest.

I loved the six weeks of boot camp at Sampson Naval Base, located on beautiful Seneca Lake, one of New York's Finger Lakes. The Navy kept all of us sailors very busy during boot camp. Because of my positive attitude and outlook on life, I made friends easily. Many of my new friends even sought my advice. I wasn't timid or shy like I was back in grammar school. Almost all of the guys complained about drilling, marching, tough exercises, and long hours. Compared to the Prison-Truck and the night shift at the trucking company, boot camp was like being on vacation. As a boy, I never had the opportunity to go to camp or be a Boy Scout. Navy boot camp became the camp I could never go to when I was a child.

The other sailors also complained about the food, but I didn't. From the time I was little until the time I was eighteen, we ate all of our meals at home. We never once went out to a restaurant to eat. My mother would cook fresh vegetables and rice with small chunks of lamb mixed in. We never had our own lamb chop, let alone a whole lamb. We never had beef, hamburger, or steak. I never tasted pork chops, French fries, or Spam. The half a lamb that my father bought every week had to last the whole week for all of us. As Catholics, we could not eat any kind of meat on Fridays, so every Friday my mother would cook up a huge batch of lentils and rice. Lentils are kind of like flat beans. She would serve a fresh vegetable salad and a dinner plate heaped with steaming lentils. As the lentils cooled they would turn a nasty shade of brown. Obviously this didn't do much for the appetite, but at least they filled our stomachs. I had never eaten in a restaurant, except for that *one* time with my father, when I had a hot roast beef sandwich with creamy hot potatoes and luscious hot gravy. But, the Navy was different. They had all kinds of food, all of those things I had never had before. I was in food heaven! After boot camp, the Navy put me on the USS Guam, which was a battle cruiser. It had the fighting power of a battleship combined with speed of a cruiser.



USS Guam, United States Navy battle cruiser

There were over 2,000 men on that ship. I was so good at shorthand, bookkeeping, and typing, that they put me in charge of keeping all of the records of all the enlisted men. I also took shorthand and typed letters and memos for the chief officer of the ship. He liked my work and I enjoyed doing it. Also, once a week, sailors who had done something wrong had to appear in front of the chief officer. Part of my job was to make a record of their punishments and keep them in their files. I heard some very interesting and creative excuses for their wrongdoings. Some of them were rather serious, some funny, while others were right down hilarious. For example, a sailor appeared before the chief officer. He was charged with urinating on the deck of the ship. When asked why, he replied, "I had to go, and I went." He was given two hours extra duty.

Sailors in preparation for battle were required to work for eight hours in their division as well as be on watch for four hours. During the time that I was on watch on the bridge of the ship, I had time to read or study. Over a six-month period of time, I put in a lot of hours studying and it paid off. I earned my GED, the equivalent of a high school education. I wrote home to my family about three times a week. I was happy to share this good news with them and they were mighty proud of me.

One day before we went into battle, I bit into a tough piece of steak and my two front teeth broke in half from decay. The ship's dentist had to pull out the remaining pieces because they were too far gone to save. I went around the ship for weeks without smiling. Our ship's dentist told me that he could only take care of cavities. I needed a dental bridge and two false teeth.

A few weeks later, we anchored in a big harbor with many other ships, including a hospital ship. Our ship's dentist would not let me go over to the hospital ship to get my teeth fixed because I could still chew food. He said he wasn't interested in my looks.

I was not very happy, so I wrote a letter to my boss, the chief officer of the ship. He was about fifty years old. In this typed letter, I wrote that I could no longer do my job if we went into real battle. I said that my battle station was in a revolving chair located on the highest deck of the ship. The chair was like a barber's chair, and I could spin all the way around in it, 360 degrees. I wrote that I had a pair of binoculars mounted to the chair to spot enemy ships or aircraft, as well as special earphones to listen with, and a red button to push down to send a message. I told him that the marine officer in charge of shooting down enemy planes stood by me with his own ear phones and binoculars. When this officer said, "Commence Fire," I had to push down on a red button attached to my ear phones and repeat the words, "Commence Fire." When the officer said, "Cease Fire," I had to repeat this as well. I said that my missing teeth interfered with my battle station, and that I was worried that the gunners would not clearly understand my words. I told him that I liked my battle station responsibilities and wanted to stay there.



My battle station

After he read my letter, the chief officer asked me to pronounce "Commence Fire" and "Cease Fire." I raised my upper lip to show him how ugly I was, and then I exaggerated the pronunciation of the words right there in front of him. It sounded something like this,

"Gamensch Fiya and Sheesh Fiya."

He kind of grinned at me as if he knew that I was exaggerating, and said, "What do you say we write a letter to the ship's dental officer?"

I quickly typed the letter he dictated to me. He signed it, and I ran it down to the ship's dental officer. When the time came for me to go to the hospital ship, the dental officer put me in charge of *all* the sailors who needed dental work done.

I got my two front teeth, and I was a happy sailor again. I went all over that ship just a'smilin' and a'whistlin'. With a bit of humor in my heart, I was sure we would win the war since my commands would now be crisp and clear. The enemy planes would be shot down and our boys would be safe, all because of my new front teeth. It was just before Christmas and they were broadcasting a variety of Christmas songs over the public address system. I burst into laughter and started singing along with the popular Christmas tune, "All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth." It was a pretty good Christmas that year, but I did miss my family.

With the new year came increased fighting. We were right in the middle of a battle zone, somewhere in the south Pacific. Whenever the marine officer gave the command, "Commence Fire," I repeated it loud and clear, and the sky would fill with tracer bullets. I saw quite a bit of action, more than I wanted to. One day we hit a Japanese plane that was flying over us. Seconds later, it caught fire, and since we were the closest ship, it headed straight for us. As I craned my neck skyward, it looked like the plane was headed right into my binoculars. I quickly prayed to God, thinking surely that would be the end of my life. Fortunately the pilot could not keep the wounded bird in the air long enough to strike our ship. He crashed into the water about 100 feet from our ship, just off the starboard bow. I saw many of these kamikaze pilots try to fly their planes into U.S. warships. Sadly, many of these suicide pilots succeeded in hitting many U.S. ships, killing thousands of American sailors. Thank God, our ship was spared.

Shortly thereafter, we witnessed an aerial attack on the USS Aircraft Carrier Franklin. A single Japanese Zero slipped through our defense. It promptly dropped two armor-piercing bombs in the middle of several airplanes that were just about to take off from the flight deck. Many explosions, one after the other, caused the quick death of 724 men and the wounding of 264 others.

While I was on watch duty later that day, I heard a message from the USS Franklin on my ship-to-ship headphones:

"Stop picking up the men floating in the sea. They are dead. We do not have time for a proper burial service."

When the battle stopped, I took my earphones off and just sat there for quite some time, thinking about all of the mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, wives, friends, and children, whose hearts would be broken because of that terrible attack by one Japanese pilot.

When the war ended, I was twenty years old. I also felt compassion for the families of all the other nations, who lost their sons and daughters in World War II. As a boy, I was the Prisoner of the Truck. In WWII, did the citizens of Japan and Germany become prisoners of political madness caused by the insanity of their leaders?

In 1945, Japanese estimates placed the total number of dead from the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at 240,000 people, not counting the injured. Shockingly, this represented fifty-three percent of the population of these two cities.

The cost of human lives in WWII is estimated at fifty-five million dead—twenty-five million of those military and thirty million civilians, including six million Jews killed in the Holocaust.

I thanked God for protecting me during that difficult time and for getting me back home safe and sound. I believed that I had served my country well, so that all men and women in all countries could find freedom. I knew that I lived in the best country in the world and I pledged that I would work hard to become the best I could be, to serve God, my country, my community, and my family. I loved America with all my heart. I would never take our freedom for granted. Indeed, America was the land of opportunity for those who were willing to make the sacrifices to succeed.

Questions a teacher or mentor should ask a student:

1. Where did Fred's strong support for his family come from? Why didn't he spend more money on himself or go out more with his friends?

2. Was it okay for Fred to exaggerate the slurring of his words “Commence Fire and Cease Fire” to get his teeth repaired? Explain.

3. What lessons can we learn from World War II that apply today?

4. How would a world war today be different than World War II?

Students - Talk to you parents or mentors about the following:

1. Were they, or members of their family, ever involved in the military?

2. What is something your parents or mentors remember about one of the wars our country was involved in, whether or not they were in the military?

3. What ideas do your parents or mentors have about preventing another World War?

Chapter 7 – Death of My Father, New Responsibility, New Business Success



Top to bottom - Joe, me, Anne, Mom, Dad, Kenny, Deanna, Jim, Vicky
Betty was at her WWII job.
My mom was pregnant with Lee.

The war ended when I was twenty. We shipped back to the United States and I wasn't quite sure what to do. I wanted to go back to school, but I knew that I had to find a job to help my family. I now had eight brothers and sisters, seven who were younger than me. From age twenty to twenty-one, along with many other WWII Veterans, I attended the Jefferson High School in Rochester from 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M., in a crash program to earn a regents high school diploma. After school, I worked a part-time job until about 8:00 P.M. Then I did my homework and went to bed.

At age twenty-one, I went to the night school of the University of Rochester to take courses in business administration, including accounting and business law. During the day, I found a job taking shorthand, typing, and bookkeeping. The pay was very good, and I loved the people I worked with. Every week, as soon as I got paid, I would give most of the money to my mother. My father was not feeling well and started to come home earlier from his fruit and vegetable business.

At eighteen years of age, my brother Joe took over my father's fruit and vegetable business. My older sister Betty was also working and was a major help to my mother and our younger brothers and sisters. My sister Anne also started to work. We became a united family, caring for my mom and our younger brothers and sisters.

At age twenty-three, I planned to go to Notre Dame University for six years to get a degree in Business and in Law. I had actually picked out the courses I would take in this six-year plan. There was still time for me to take advantage of the GI Bill of Rights. The government would pay for all of my tuition. But I worried about my mother, father, brothers, and sisters. I knew that my father needed help raising our rather large family. He was slowing down. One night I went out into the back yard to think about what I should do.

I found myself praying to God for direction. Should I go to Notre Dame, which was far away from home? The college was out in Indiana. Should I stay home and go to night school while I worked during the day? Or, did God want me to become a priest? I asked God to show me a shooting star. If I saw one, I told him that I would become a priest. My eyes scanned the velvety night sky. It was spangled with glittering diamonds, but not one of them moved. They all stayed in position. I did not see a shooting star. Instead, I heard my father's voice behind me.

He said, "What are you doing out here?"

I said, "Just thinking about my future."

He said, "I have some bad news for you. I'll tell you what your future is going to be. Last week, my doctor told me that I have high blood pressure and a heart problem. He said that I could die within the next 90 days. In the old country, the oldest boy becomes the head of the house if his father passes away. If I die, you must promise me that you will take care of your mother, your brothers, and sisters."

I was shocked. I said, "Pa, do not talk like that. You will not die. You are too young."

I reached out to hug him and whispered in his ear. "Pa, do not worry. If you die I will take care of our family."

My father wrapped his arms tight around me as tears streamed down his cheeks. I couldn't hold back the tears either as he finally gave me the hug that I wanted for so many years on that Prison-Truck. I knew he loved me.

Then he looked at me and said, "Do you promise?"

I said, "Yes Pa."

Two months later, in March of 1950, at the age of fifty-two, my father died from a sudden heart attack. He was playing cards behind a store over on East Avenue, not far from our Park Avenue home. My father was laid out in an open casket in our living room for two days. People from all over the city of Rochester came to our house to pay their last respects to my father. They would kneel at the casket and say a short prayer. Then they would turn to our family members and tell us how sorry they were that we lost our father. My youngest brother, Lee, was only five years old and kept wiping his teary eyes. Many of those paying their respects also had tears in their eyes. It was very sad for them to see a mother with eight children, standing in line according to their age, all the way down to my five-year-old baby brother Lee. Many of my Pa's customers were there. They told me that when he opened his huckster's purse to make change, he would show them a worn envelope and letter that I had written to him on Father's Day while I was in the Navy. They said that he always spoke about me with great pride. Of course, this brought tears to my eyes.

We shivered with cold at the cemetery as the priest said the prayers. When we entered the long funeral car, I turned around to look back at the coffin one last time, as two cemetery workers prepared to lower the casket into the cold earth. My mother and eight brothers and sisters sat in total silence as we drove back to our Park Avenue house. We huddled close to each other in the funeral car for comfort and warmth. I knew that my father was with God, and that thought brought me some peace of mind.

I was not afraid to be the head of the house and no longer had to worry about choices. There was only one choice and that was to keep my promise to my father and be the best "substitute father" that I could to my brothers and sisters. I was filled with confidence and determination. I knew I could do it. I had enough practice.

At the age of twenty-five, I asked my mother if she would risk losing our Park Avenue home because I wanted to borrow \$10,000 from the bank to buy a coffee vending business. This would mean putting a big mortgage on our home. If I failed, I could not make the payments every month. We could lose our home again. It would be the same way my father lost his home on Driving Park Avenue in the Great Depression, thirteen years earlier. My mother said that she had total confidence in anything I did. She was willing to risk the loss of her beautiful new home.

I became an entrepreneur. The coffee vending machine was called Kwik Kafe. The machine was manufactured in Philadelphia by two World War II veterans. We would expand these machines into factories, offices, and other public places. A person would deposit a nickel into the machine. A paper cup would drop down into the cup well. Next, hot water and liquid coffee concentrate would come out of a tube and mix into the cup. The purchaser could push one or both buttons for cream and sugar. A stick would

then pop out for stirring. This vending machine served a good cup of coffee. It had a rich but not overpowering flavor, and it was piping hot.



One of our first Kwik Kafe service vehicles

However, when I first began to try and market these machines, owners and bosses did not want coffee vending machines in their workplaces. They were afraid their employees would hang around the coffee machines drinking coffee all day, instead of working, like they were supposed to.

But, when you are a boy and you have to work on your Pa's truck from age eight to fourteen, the way I did, you learn something about making sacrifices, about being patient, about good study habits, and about choosing friends who do not distract you from these goals.

I was determined to use the lessons learned on my Pa's truck, as well as the business lessons I learned in the schools that I went to:

The Golden Rule. *I would grow a successful business with the Golden Rule as my banner—putting myself in the shoes of my customer and my team players—treating them the way I would want to be treated if I were in their shoes*

Honesty. *Honesty would never be compromised. My customer would get a monthly report showing the meter readings that were on every coffee machine. He would also get a check from us—a commission on the total sales of every machine. I would never lie, steal, or cheat.*

Enthusiasm and Choices *(the strawberry story). Knowing that I had the best cup of coffee in the vending business, I would reflect this in a good*

way in every sales call that I made or every letter I wrote. I would be patient in the sales process, avoiding any high-pressured sales tactics, knowing that decisions are not made on the first sales call. In a tactful way, I would offer choices, such as a coffee machine on every floor to make it convenient for the employees, or rescheduling a new appointment within one month or two months, or suggesting a trial this month or next month.

Open Communication *(the empty basket story). I would listen to my customer. I would react in a positive way to what he had to say. I would provide letters of recommendation from companies satisfied with the benefits of a coffee vending service, such as a happier and more productive worker.*

Imagination. *I would allow my mind to flow with new ideas that would benefit our customer, our employees, and our community (for example, printing not-for-profit community service messages on every paper cup vended from our coffee machine).*

Being Up Front With Mistakes. *Growing any business is not always easy or perfect. As a manager or coach, if I, or any member of my business team made a mistake with our customers, I would openly admit the mistake, make the corrections and move on. Of course, I would do my utmost to prevent repeated mistakes that could harm our business.*

Faith and Belief. *All of my life I believed in a higher power. In my life, that power was God, no different than the "In God We Trust" that appears on all of our U.S. coins and bills, or the God that appears in our Pledge of Allegiance. This is the same God that I believe is worshiped by Christians, Muslims, and Jews. If God is truly my judge, then I have to answer to Him to be sure that I truly practice the Golden Rule. When I do practice the Golden Rule, it is good for my business, for the people I work with, and the people I live with. What is most important, it makes me a happier and a more successful person.*

Growing the business was not always easy or perfect. As a manager or coach, if I made mistakes with my customers or my business team I would admit them and move on. I would get tired. Almost daily, I'd have to recharge my batteries of enthusiasm, positive attitude and determination. I became active in the Junior Chamber of Commerce where I served as a volunteer in programs helping kids. I became a leader in the Community Chest Campaign – now called United Fund Campaign.

During my childhood I had also learned the importance of prayer in a person's life, for everything, not just for the bad times. It's also a good idea to have other people praying for you too. Not far from our Park Avenue home, was an order of Sisters, called the Carmelites. They lived in a convent over on East Avenue and they *never* left the premises. Except for prayers and songs, they never spoke, for they had taken a vow of silence. They would pray religiously for such things as an end to hunger and world peace. Only

one nun at the convent was allowed to speak and she didn't say much. You could talk to her through a small, screened window, but you could never see her face.

After I started the Kwik Kafe business, I would always drive by their convent on my way to work. Each day I would slowly drive up the tree-lined driveway and give a dozen eggs to the nun at the window. Every day she would ask me what I wanted the sisters to pray for. I told her I wanted the nuns to pray that I would be a success in business. Months of prayers drifted skyward from the devoted nuns and my business steadily grew. At the age of 26, I became the Coffee King of Rochester selling 15 million cups of coffee a year. It seemed like a miracle to me and it was. I realized that if you are honest, work hard, fairly coach a good team and have someone praying for you, you are pretty tough to beat. Of course, it also pays to have the best tasting cup of coffee in town and to be totally honest in reporting coffee sales. And it also pays to express gratitude for prayers.

As the vending business grew, my sisters and brothers, Betty, Joe, Anne, Jim and Vicky, became an important part of our Kwik Kafe team. If anyone complained about a cup of coffee, our servicemen would give their money back, no questions asked. We all worked very hard to be the best we could be. Our team did such a good job at providing a quality product and keeping our customers satisfied, we gave back very few nickels. I was a good coach, sincerely using the Golden Rule in all of my dealings with customers and team players. We had a full-length mirror at our service center. After restocking their station wagons and placing a removable Kwik Kafe cup on top of the vehicles, each serviceman had to stand in front of the mirror before he drove to his first stop. On top of the mirror it read: "This is how I look to my customer." On the sides of the mirror, were the following questions:

1. Is my hair cut and neatly combed?
2. Am I wearing my cap?
3. Are my hands and fingernails clean?
4. Are my shoes shined?
5. Am I clean-shaven?
6. Is my service vehicle clean and shiny?
7. Do I have my cleaning supplies?
8. Do I promise to smile and be enthusiastic with my customers?
9. Do I have my quality control tools?
10. Do I give refunds cheerfully?
11. Do I record meter readings properly?

As we continued to grow, we put donut machines next to the coffee machines so the workers could have a fresh donut with their hot cup of coffee. My kid brothers and sisters would wrap and pack doughnuts early in the morning in the basement of our Park Avenue home, before school started.

To keep costs down, every serviceman owned his own station wagon which we rented from him. This was good for saving money in our business and passing these savings on to our customers in their monthly checks. During the workday, they would have a big metal Kwik Kafe cup strapped to the top of their wagons. At the end of the day, they would remove the Kwik Kafe cups, put them back into the garage and have an attractive and reliable vehicle for their own use. This rental plan was good for Kwik Kafe and good for them. Most importantly, we did not need a repair garage and mechanic to keep these vehicles working or a parking lot to keep them overnight or over weekends.

For seven consecutive years, my company, Kwik Kafe of Rochester, won the national award for being the most outstanding dealer in the United States. My mother would go with me to Philadelphia to receive the awards.

As the years rolled by, we had to move into a bigger building. We constructed a large kitchen where many ladies baked culinary delights for our vending machines. We were the best in Rochester. Once word got out about our quality, service and honesty, many area businesses and companies asked us to take over their kitchens and manage their cafeterias.

This led to food service contracts in schools, colleges, hospitals and nursing homes. Before I knew it, by age 29, I had built a company with over 1000 employees and fifty trucks. Appearance, enthusiasm and attitude do count! Our family unity and company spirit, coupled with our determined dedication to give our customers the very best, with total honesty, paid off.

A big part of our food service contracts with business, schools, nursing homes and hospitals related to our huge buying power. When you buy food products and supplies for so many customers, you get the benefit of big discounts and rebates that should be passed on to customers. I discovered that we failed to do this. I brought in a big accounting firm, to audit our food service contracts. They found errors in favor of our customers. I sent a letter of apology to these customers with a big refund check. By this act, our company developed a reputation for total honesty and many new customers signed contracts that assured them quality of product, service and integrity.

With a growing list of happy customers, we convinced Eastman Kodak in Rochester, NY, to allow us to run a side-by-side coffee taste test with the Canteen Corporation of America, a big firm on the New York Stock Exchange. This company had all of the Kodak coffee vending business. The Kodak employees preferred our Kwik Kafe over Canteen's—ten to one. We won the test. Forty-five thousand employees drank 45,000 cups of coffee a day. With many other locations, our coffee business grew to fifteen million cups a year. It was like little David in the Bible slaying the Giant with a slingshot.

At the age of twenty-seven, I became the coffee king of Rochester selling 60,000 cups of coffee a day—fifteen million cups a year.



Kodak—one of hundreds of Kwik Kafe locations

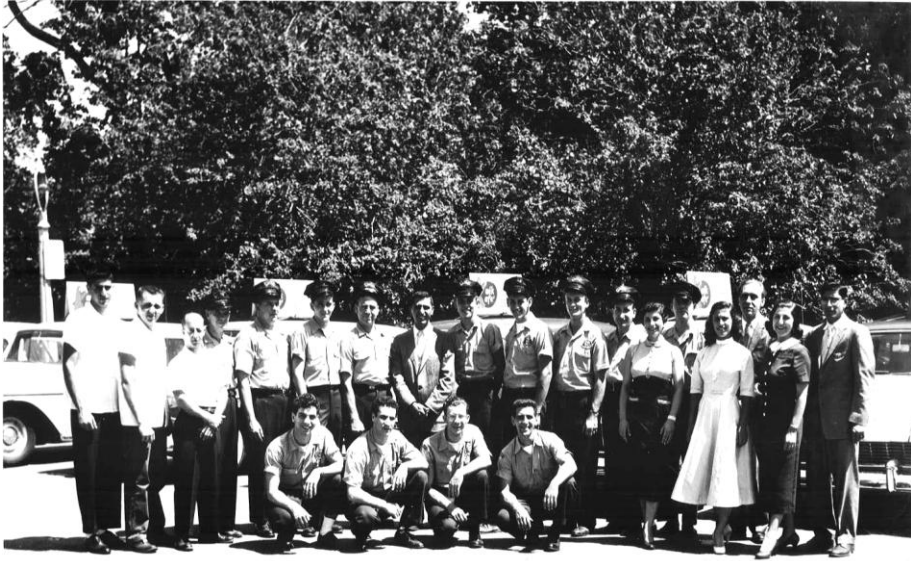


1968 Community Chest Campaign
Adding creative fun to helping others with a "Safari Hunt" for Dollars.
That's me being carried.

For seven consecutive years, my company, Kwik Kafe of Rochester, won the national award for being the best Kwik Kafe dealer in the United States. My mother, who allowed me to mortgage our home to start this business, would go with me to Philadelphia to receive the awards at the U.S. annual convention of Kwik Kafe dealers. It wasn't long before mom bought a small sign for her kitchen. It read "God bless our un-mortgaged home." No bank could ever take it away, as they did when we lived on Driving Park Avenue.

I became active in the Junior Chamber of Commerce where I served as a volunteer in programs helping kids. I became a leader in the Community Chest Campaign, now called United Fund Campaign. I brought lots of new ideas and fun into fund-raising.

As the vending business grew, my sisters and brothers, Betty, Joe, Anne, Jim, and Vicky, became an important part of our Kwik Kafe team. If anyone complained about a cup of coffee, our neat, well-dressed, uniformed servicemen would give their money back, no questions asked. We all worked very hard to be the best we could be. Our team did such a good job in providing a quality product and keeping our customers satisfied, Rochester companies asked us to take care of all of their vending machines.



The Kwik Kafe national award-winning team
Three sisters and two brothers are in the picture—a brother on each end—
me in the middle, back row.

My company moved into a big, new building. In addition to our office and warehousing space, we constructed a large kitchen where many ladies prepared food for our vending machines. We were the best full food and vending service company in Rochester. Businesses, universities, schools, hospitals, and retirement homes allowed us to take over their kitchens and provide the management and people to run them.

Before I knew it, by age twenty-nine, I had built a company with over 1,000 employees and fifty trucks. Appearance, enthusiasm, and attitude do count! Our family unity and company spirit, coupled with our determined dedication to give our customers the very best with total honesty, paid off.



Our expansion into employee cafeterias throughout Rochester
This was the Rochester Telephone Company.

A big part of our food service contracts with business, schools, nursing homes, and hospitals was due to our huge buying power. When you buy food products and supplies for so many customers, you get the benefit of big discounts and rebates that can be passed on to customers. One year, I discovered that we failed to pass these savings to our customers. I brought in a big accounting firm, to audit our food service contracts. They found errors in favor of our customers. I sent a letter of apology to these customers with a big refund check. By this act, our company developed a reputation for total honesty, and many new customers signed contracts that assured them quality of product, service, and integrity.

Because of my business success, I wanted to give something back to the community. I became very active and won many awards in volunteer community service organizations.

In 1955, at age twenty-nine, I met Helen Margaret O'Hara. My sister Anne made the introduction at a family breakfast after church one Sunday. I was clumsy at this breakfast meeting. I spilled a glass of milk. I think it was because I was distracted by Helen's sweet smile and freckles. In addition to being a health teacher, Helen was a lifeguard and a waterfront director at a YMCA camp on Canandaigua Lake, NY.

In 1956, when I was thirty, Helen and I were married at St. Nicholas Church, on the corner of Leo Street and Remington Street in Rochester. Helen gave up her teaching career to be a full-time mom. Gina was our first-born child. Gregory was our second. My business was a booming success. I

was able to support my mother and my younger brothers and sisters. I was on top of the world.

At the age of thirty-four, I merged with a national company and became a millionaire. I became the vice president in charge of the northeastern United States with a potential to become the national president. In food service and vending machines, I would now be responsible for \$100 million in yearly sales and about 5,000 employees.

We moved into a big mansion at 199 Ambassador Drive in Rochester. I was grateful to my father and mother for the lessons I learned from both of them. I was also grateful to God for His many blessings.

My mom, who risked the mortgage on the home that I had bought for her, was so very proud. Because of her own community service to our St. Nicholas Church and to others, she received a flag that flew over the White House from Congressman Frank Horton. Both my mom and Congressman Horton are deceased. Below is a photo from that proud day.



My precious mom and Congressman Frank Horton in 1959

Questions a teacher or mentor should ask a student:

1. Was it fair for Fred's father to ask him to take care of the whole family? Explain?

2. What were the important lessons that Fred learned from his father that helped him to be successful?

Students - Talk to your parents or mentors about the following:

1. Have your parents or your mentors ever turned failure into success? How?

2. What advice would your parents or mentors give you about overcoming a failure?

3. Have your parents or mentors lost their parents? What do they remember about that experience?

Chapter 8 – Ups and Downs

Bristol Mountain

In 1963, at age thirty-seven, many community leaders in Rochester were aware of my success in business. They were asking me to donate money for new hospital or college buildings. This happened to be a time when my wife and I took up skiing. To get to ski areas that had lots of natural snowfall, we had to drive two to three hours.

So, when two very smart engineers from General Motors came to me with an idea for a ski area only 20 miles from Rochester, I decided, with their help, to bring skiing closer to the Rochester community. In my mind, winter recreation was just as important as hospitals and colleges. But, there was a big risk. The mountain in the Bristol Hills was not in a snow belt. When the wind blows in an easterly direction over the Great Lakes in the winter, moisture in the air turns to snow. They call that the "snow belt." Ski places in the snow belt would get anywhere from 200 to 300 inches of snow a year. So, very few people would be foolish enough to build a ski area outside of the snow belt, especially like the Bristol Hills area, where the average was only eighty inches of snowfall a year.

But these two smart engineers knew about snow-making machines. They had the land, but they didn't have the money to build a ski area on it. I became the money man. A money man provides the start-up cash and helps to get a loan from a bank to make a business happen. My two very smart engineer partners would plan, build, and run the ski area with snow-making machines and lights. That way, we all thought, we would not have to depend on natural snow fall. With lights for night skiing, we would be able to have day and night skiing—a place for people and school students to ski after work and after school, and only forty minutes from Rochester. While my partners managed the ski area, I would stay with my vice-president's job in food and vending services.

We named the ski area Bristol Mountain. It would have the highest skiing elevation from Rochester westward to the Rocky Mountains. We would have the world's largest snow-making and night-lighting system. I thought this would be my payoff to the people of the Rochester area for helping to make me a wealthy man. To me, this was just as important as donating a hospital wing or a building for a college or university. To me, recreation of the spirit was just as important as medical care or education. I never expected to get rich in the ski business. Nor did I ever think that this decision for a new venture would change my life forever.

Most of the time when growing a business, people look to others for help. They need lawyers, accountants, and specialists. Just like in medicine, there are all kinds of specialists in business. Well, we hired an experienced

specialist in designing the trails and slopes for Bristol Mountain and to help with plans for snow-making. To make a long story short, the design specialist we hired goofed. He did not design the trails and slopes wide enough. He did not plan enough snow-making equipment to make the amount of snow that would be needed. Bristol Mountain got off to a poor start. Other public and private ski areas also put in snow-making. So, because of bad design as well as competition from other ski areas, as the money-man, I had to put more money into the ski area to correct the design failures of an expert.

There is a book written by Ernest Hemingway titled, “The Old Man and the Sea.” It is a fascinating story about a fisherman who embarks on a yearly journey to catch the “Big Fish.” Finally, after many years, he catches the “Big Fish,” the fish of his dreams. He struggles for hours as the Big Fish drags his tiny boat over the rough and stormy seas. When the Big Fish finally gives up its struggle, the Old Man ties it alongside his boat, because it is too long and heavy to get into the boat. The Old Man is exhausted from the long, tiring battle, but he begins the long, slow process of towing the Big Fish back to shore. As he is rowing, sharks begin to take bites out of the monstrous fish. He tries to beat the attacking fish away with his oars. After several days of struggling against the weather and the sea, he finally makes it back to the harbor. As the Big Fish is being hoisted out of the water, the Old Man notices that only thing left of his trophy catch is a head and a skeleton. The sharks had devoured his dream, bite by bite.

So it was, every year with the “Big Ski Mountain.” Each season, the ski area would be launched when there was enough man-made snow on the mountain to open. The attacking sharks were from different sources—warm winters, competition, and the constant need for expansion and modernization.

But, the biggest shark of all was the 1980-81 interest rates that had to be paid to the bank. In a short period of time, this interest rate sky-rocketed from six percent to twenty percent, or \$400,000 a year, on the \$2 million we borrowed from the bank. At age fifty-five, in 1981, after seventeen years of trying, I had to surrender the ski area to the bank, and I lost over a million dollars that I had put into it.

But, there was a difference between the Old Man and the Sea and the Mountain. The attacks did not kill the Mountain. The bank put more money into it. The good news: Today, under good management, Bristol Mountain is the premier ski resort in western New York State, and thousands of skiers and snow boarders enjoy professional, challenging, and safe ski conditions.

Although I failed to retain ownership of my dream, it still lives and prospers. I treated the loss of the mountain as if it were a seventeen-year-old kid of mine who left home and is now doing very well on his or her own. This was my payback to the community that contributed to my success in the food and vending business.

Bristol Mountain Resort



Today's Bristol Mountain—a salute to Dan Fuller - the new owner

Bristol Harbour Village



A winter photograph from my condominium home at Bristol Harbour Village
on Canandaigua Lake, New York

Today, in 2007, about twenty miles south of south of Rochester, NY, and only a ten-minute drive from Bristol Mountain, Bristol Harbour Village is a successful \$100 million resort on Canandaigua Lake, one of the beautiful Finger lakes of New York State.

In 1968, when I was forty-two, I was also working on a plan to begin the first phase of this Village. I had hoped that I could turn this planned Village into a profit—one that would help me with the money problems I was having with Bristol Mountain. The Village would include modern five-story buildings with spectacular views, a marina, and modern plants to handle water and sewer services.

Soon after the plans for Bristol Harbour Village were released to the press, neighbors on the lake started many legal battles against me, but my plans were all legal and I was breaking no laws. The governments involved checked all plans carefully. They were convinced that we would not harm the pure waters of Canandaigua Lake. After two years of struggling, and almost out of money, we won government approvals to go ahead.

At the same time, the national company I worked for asked me to become the president of their business division in the entire United States. I had to think about moving my family to Philadelphia. I would have 50,000 employees under me and be responsible for over one billion dollars in yearly sales. I would be close to Washington, D.C. Because of my business experience, I thought I could volunteer to work on U.S. government programs to be sure that food going to starving nations would actually get to the poor, rather than to dishonest men who intercepted this food for their own profit. In fact, in riding the chairlift several times with Bobby Kennedy at Bristol Mountain, prior to his death, I had expressed my interest to Senator Kennedy in this good cause. I truly believed he would call upon me if and when he became our U.S. president. And if he did, I would have left anything I was doing for this great and worthy cause. That's for sure.

Kennedy was assassinated. The new job in Philadelphia would involve U.S. travel away from home at least seventy percent of the time. My five children were all under fourteen years of age. I did not want to be on the road while my children were growing up. I made one of the biggest decisions in my life. I decided to resign from my food and vending company, stay close to my family, and devote my full time to start the first phase of Bristol Harbour Village.

So, armed with government approvals to begin construction, my search for money for the Village began. I ran into a buzz saw of opposition from Rochester banks. They had too many customers who were opposed to my Village plans. I had to search for new money outside of Rochester. I found the money. We completed the first phase of the Village—a major start.

Sometimes it seems that with every solution comes another problem. Even though part of my dream was complete, I still needed new money for the second phase. I had used up all the money I earned in the sale of my food and vending business. I had to sell my big, beautiful 6,000 square foot home on Ambassador Drive in Rochester to manage the Village planning full time. Basically broke and without a job, I moved our family into a small 1,200 square foot cabin on what was then vacant land on the Village property. For the first time in my life, I began to taste the bitterness of total defeat. My wife and I now had five children: Gina, Greg, Wade, Fritz, and Josh. Again, like a plunging roller coaster ride, I was on the verge of bottoming out. I felt like a total failure, and the local newspapers were right there to confirm and publicize my financial woes.

I would get tired working from sunrise to sunset. I would ask God to keep me calm, to help with my energy level, to remember the lessons learned on my father's truck. I had created for myself a new "prison." My wealth was drained. I would learn in this new prison. I would not give up. I would remember the important lessons I learned on my Pa's truck and I would ask God for help in a plan that would enable me to finish the second phase of the village—one where the Village residents and my opponents (my neighboring lake residents) would enjoy the nearby convenience of a great golf course, restaurant, and nearby Bristol Mountain.

In May of 1972, when I turned forty-six, my patience and perseverance were rewarded. A major insurance company became my partner. But there was a condition. Certain goals had to be met. Otherwise, I would lose everything I put into the Village. My dream was accomplished. Phase Two of Bristol Harbour Village was now a successful reality. Over 175 new condominiums were ready for sale. The golf course, marina, and sewer and water services were modern and completed. I was on top of the world.

Being on top of the world is actually a difficult place to be because there's only one way to go. In 1973, the biggest oil crisis in the world hit the United States just when we were ready to open our condominium models to the people. The gasoline shortage scared everyone. No one wanted to travel great distances and we were about ten miles from Canandaigua and about thirty miles from Rochester. Sales of our new Village homes were few and far between. The condos needed to be sold to pay back all of the money that had been borrowed. The homes didn't sell and I was forced to surrender my share of the ownership. I lost *all* of the money I had put into the project. My prayers had been answered and my Village dream had been built, but there it stood—175 empty condominiums that were selling very, very slowly.

I accepted the apparent defeat and rapid loss of my money without being bitter or sad. I was kind of getting used to being broke. My partner, the insurance company, asked me to stay on to help sell the remaining

condominium homes that were built. I was out of money and needed to take care of my family, so I took the job.

Three years later, in 1975, under my direction, we sold all of the Bristol Harbour homes, but now I was forty-nine years old and out of a job—again. I went back to the national company in Philadelphia that I had merged with in the past. My timing was bad. The founders of the company wanted to rehire me, but the newer, younger executives overruled them. I didn't get the job.

In 1977, while recovering from major surgery, I started a company to take care of the maintenance needs of the condominium and home owners at the Village. Another company took care of the sales and rentals. My income was barely enough to support my family.

In 1980, at age fifty-four, I also went back into the food and vending service business with my younger brother Joe, the super sales and customer relations man who worked with me in the past. In spite of our absence from this business for *nine* years, the memories of our past good service and total honesty served us well. If there is any example of the power of honesty, this new start-up business experience is a great example. Our past reputation for quality and integrity led to rapid growth and included again, a major contract for all of the coffee vending machines at Kodak. Of course, we let our enthusiasm shine, and the lessons we learned selling strawberries when we were kids served us well.

Also, in 1980, with the encouragement of about 200 homeowners at Bristol Harbour Village who valued my concern for their best interests, I led a team of investors who purchased the Village from Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company. I became the managing partner. My goal was to continue the development in a modest way, to eliminate money losses, and to achieve a reasonable profit.

In 1986, six years later, because of major changes in Rochester's business economy, we sold our food and vending business to the Rochester Coca Cola Bottling Company. I recovered all of the money I had lost in Bristol Mountain.

Joe and I proved that when life hands you a lemon, you make lemonade. At age fifty-four, I took a Village and Mountain failure, embraced that failure, learned from that failure, set new goals, took new risks, put my imagination to work, and at age sixty, I turned failure into success. Along with this positive attitude, Joe and I believed in a spiritual partnership that guided our service and integrity, and again, one that appears on all U.S. paper money and coins; one that reads, "In God We Trust."

In 1990, as the Managing Partner of Bristol Harbour Village, I found a qualified buyer, with a net worth of over \$30 million, who purchased the

project at less than it would have cost to duplicate it. Our partnership achieved a substantial profit.

At this point in my life, at age sixty-four, I retired from business. I had two goals. One was to play lots of tennis. The other was to continue to be a coach to two of my sons in a new business venture. This involved a device that would help millions of people. This was a machine that was rented to pharmacies in drug stores. The machine offered a free blood pressure test to the customers of the store. The machine is very accurate and easy to use and measures one's blood pressure on the upper arm, the way a doctor does.

In 2007, in both New York State and Canada, three of my sons have built separate companies and teams that serve over 6,000 drug stores with an automatic machine that measures a person's blood pressure at the press of a button, and at no cost. These machines give over seventy-five million free blood pressure tests a year. Wow! The thousands of drug stores who lease these machines deserve a lot of credit because they obviously care about their customers. High blood pressure is one of the world's biggest killers and crippers. By detecting and treating high blood pressure early, many lives have been saved; many strokes and crippling injuries have been avoided. My father died at age 52 from high blood pressure. He might have been saved with earlier detection and treatment. Indeed, my Pa would be proud of his grandsons and their good work.

When I lost the ski area in 1981, I kept looking for a new business opportunity. If I had not lost the ski area, I would have never been involved in the blood pressure testing business with my three sons. Their emphasis on quality control and accuracy has earned the respect of the pharmacies and medical community. To think that they are in the business of saving lives and preventing suffering related to high blood pressure makes me indeed proud of their outstanding achievement. They have earned many awards for being the best company of its kind in all of North America. God works in mysterious ways, and it often takes many years for us to see His purpose.

I sometimes think that if I had gone on to make millions upon millions of dollars, my five kids could very well have been spoiled kids—college bred—made by their father's dough. Instead, they had to borrow money and earn their way through college. During my battle with the sharks, they worked hard to help their father out. They had empathy for me and supported me all the way. They earned their own spending money and bought their own fun things.

As little guys, they shagged balls on the driving range to earn a few dollars. They painted ski towers, took care of golf and marina customers, and learned how to deal with people and their complaints. My daughter worked in the offices of my businesses, flexible to my needs. Today, all of them have their own businesses. All are happily married. We are blessed with twelve grandchildren. I am very proud of my kids, their spouses, and our grandkids.

My wife was my tower of strength and remarkable patience, never complaining about her husband's setbacks or the sacrifices she had to make.

Wow, I thought, there is a blessing in adversity. And there was a God to whom I could surrender all of the pressure of that time. In that surrender I would find peace, creativity, and energy to try to be the best I could be, in good or bad times.

And do my kids have a sense of humor? They sure do. A sense of humor is important in everyone's life. Throughout my life I knew that a sense of humor relieves some of the stress of a difficult situation. It's good to laugh and cry at times. One evening, during this difficult time in my life, my five children provided a bit of comic relief. The kids ranged in age from six to sixteen. I had barely survived another grueling day in the trenches, and I arrived at home, late for dinner. I dropped my bags at the door, washed my hands, and quickly slid into my chair at the table. I said grace and the mad scramble began. Plates of food were being passed in every direction, and the kids were chattering away about the day's events.

I looked over at Wade and said, "Fritz, pass the salt."

Wade said, "Dad, I'm not Fritz, I'm Wade," and with a mildly disgusted look on his face, he passed the salt.

I began to eat my meal and after a few minutes I looked at Fritz and said, "Greg, pass the bread."

Fritz said, "Dad, I'm not Greg, I'm Fritz," and with a puzzled look, he passed me the bread.

Without warning, I threw down my fork in anger and said, "Look you guys, I've had a rough day. It seems that my entire day has been full of mistakes. Every phone call, every meeting, everything I typed went wrong, all day long. I know who you are! I came home to escape my problems and mistakes, and all you can do is to keep pointing them out for me."

I stormed out of the kitchen and went to my bedroom. I washed my face to cool down. Knowing that I had overreacted and disrupted the entire family's dinner, I returned to the table within three minutes. Feeling bad about my unkind behavior, I avoided any eye contact. I just slipped back into my spot and looked down at my dinner plate. There was total silence. After a minute or two, I finally looked up. I immediately burst into laughter when I noticed that all of my five children had pinned name tags on their shirts. They roared and howled with laughter and I was laughing right along with them. Oh, how I loved them then, and I still do.

Then there is the story of my son Wade. During several of those difficult years, Wade was enrolled in the Hotel School at Cornell. During the summer prior to his sophomore year, Wade said, "Dad, come on in my bedroom and see what I bought."

He turned on his \$700 hi-fi compact stereo system. I said, "Wade, we're supposed to be working together to get you through college."

Wade said, "But Dad, this was my money, not yours."

I sarcastically said, "So, Wade, your money is your money and my money is your money? Tell you what, Wade. You now have to borrow the maximum you can to get through college. I will try to provide the rest."

I also suggested that whatever money I gave him for his college education would be given to him in one-dollar bills. That way, as he paid his tuition, he would realize how hard I had to work for every dollar.

A few years later, after Wade was married, someone asked him about his hi-fi compact stereo system. Wade, smiling at me, replied,

"Oh, that. It cost me \$15,000." (That was the amount of money Wade borrowed and still owed at that time for his education.) Today, Wade is our family's professional financial planner, an expert in his field.

Coping with Cancer

In the midst of losing a ski mountain and a village, I read about cancer of the prostate in men over fifty. The prostate is an important organ inside the body. If cancer spreads outside of the prostate, it could cause a painful and early death. I was a believer in early detection of any disease. At age sixty, I insisted on a doctor's examination and a blood test. The test showed that I did have cancer but that they had caught it in the early stages. I had thirty-eight radiation treatments to kill the cancer. It would take several years to see if all of the cancer cells died. I asked God to cure me. I was a new grandfather and really wanted to live to see all of my grandchildren.

Now, at age eighty-one, my annual blood tests showed that my cancer was cured. I'm hoping that my early detection and cure is an example to parents and grandparents who read *Yes Pa*. Early detection is the key to success when fighting any type of cancer.

When I was seventy, Helen and I bought a home in Florida. We became snowbirds. That's what they call people who "fly" south to escape winters. We spend over six months in Florida and the rest of the time at our Bristol Harbour Village founder's condominium.

I had recaptured my wealth. I was now free to play all of the tennis I wanted to. I could take care of my wife and myself in our old age and not be dependent on our children. I had a new goal. I wanted to win a national singles tennis title in my age group, seventy to seventy-five. I entered many tennis tournaments in Florida. I was ranked in the top ten in the state of Florida. I was taking lessons and playing a lot of tennis because my new goal was to become number one in the United States.

After my run at a tennis title, I began to write my first book, *Prisoner of the Truck*. It was written as an autobiography, as a gift to my family. I spent the entire summer of 1998 working on it, and I was having fun. I was comfortably retired, didn't have to worry about money and I even got some great news from my doctor. He said, "*Fred, you are totally cured of cancer.*" Combined with the good news of my business recovery and surrounded by a loving family, I was a very happy man.

Questions a teacher or a mentor should ask a child:

1. What were some of the obstacles that arose surrounding the development of Bristol Mountain and Bristol Harbour Village?

2. Why do you think neighbors wanted to block Fred's plans for Bristol Harbour Village?

3. What could Fred have done differently?

4. Explain why a sense of humor is important during ups and downs in a person's life?

Students - Talk to your parents or mentors about the following:

1. Have your parents or mentor ever felt like they were on a financial or emotional roller coaster? Explain.

2. Have your parents or mentor ever had to be patient about something? Explain.

3. Have your parents or mentor ever used humor to lighten a family situation? Explain

Chapter 9 – A Shocking Discovery



My brother Joe after successful heart surgery—
always smiling through any adversity

During the summer of 1998, I finished my autobiography, *Prisoner of the Truck*. It was over 300 pages long. I made copies for the members of my family and put them together into a loose-leaf binder. My family and friends encouraged me to find a company to publish this book. (With help of family and friends, I did publish *Prisoner of the Truck* in 2002.)

Going back to November of 1998, my brother Joe was having serious complications six weeks after heart surgery. So I rushed from Florida to Rochester as fast as I could. My cousin, Dr. Richard Sarkis, then the Chief of Staff at Sarasota Memorial Hospital, came with me. Joe had a very small mushroom-shaped tumor inside his heart that had to be removed. Only one patient out of 500,000 had this rare complication. If this tiny mushroom broke loose from the inner wall of his heart, he would die instantly. Thankfully, the tumor was removed successfully.

Two days after his surgery, I went back to visit Joe. Only immediate relatives were allowed in his room. The door to his room was closed, so I entered quietly. I was the only family member there. Joe was still being fed intravenously and the oxygen inserts were still in his nose. He looked like a truck had hit him. His face was puffed up, but he had good color in his cheeks. The doctors said he would experience some post-operative pain, but they assured us that he would fully recover. I gently touched his arm, and he opened his eyes.

We just stared at each other for a few moments, but then Joe broke the silence, “Hey, I liked the first chapters of the book you are writing. I hope you finish it.”

That was just like Joe. He was always concerned about me, and what I was doing, not about himself. As I sat there beside him holding his swollen hand, I thought about how fast time had gone by. Here it was, 1998. Wow! I found the “key” to my freedom from the truck in 1940, over fifty-eight years ago. Joe, who was four years younger than me, also worked on my father’s truck. He started when he was ten years old. Joe was the little darling who outsold me four to one, before I changed my attitude with a little coaching by my warden. For years I had assumed that Joe’s childhood experiences on the Prison-Truck were about the same as mine. I figured that he must have been just about as glad to be “free” of the truck as I was. *Surprisingly, we had never talked about it before.*

With his eyes half-swollen shut and breathing heavily, Joe squeezed my hand and said, “Fred, about your book—I didn’t know how much you hated your work with Pa. Things were a little different for me, I guess. I never felt that it was a prison. When I worked with Pa, he was not feeling well and was cutting back on his hours. Maybe it was because you worked six days a week. I only had to work Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays while our brother Jim worked on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Maybe that made a big difference.”

Joe seemed to be feeling the pain of his operation as he groaned, “I read that you hated those four hours on winter Saturday nights, when you were locked in the back of the truck while he was inside Hedges Bar & Grill.”

In the forty-eight years since our father’s death, Joe and I had never talked about Hedges Bar and Grill. Joe seemed to be falling asleep, yet he said, “Why didn’t you go into the bar with him?”

I said, “He wouldn’t let me. I think he was trying to protect me from seeing bad behaviors in the bar.”

Joe fought to stay awake and said, “After a few winter Saturday nights in the back of the truck, I just told Pa that I was going in the bar with him. I was hungry and wanted a hot meal.”

Pa said, “No,” but I said, “I’m not staying in the back of this damn truck.”

“Fred, I just ignored him and followed him into the bar, and I did every Saturday night thereafter. What choice did he have?”

My first thought was, “just like Joe.” No one could ever make Joe a prisoner. No one could force Joe to do something that he didn’t want to do. As a boy, he always had more guts than I did. He was never the obedient, shy, and timid boy that I was.

I sat there in silence by the side of his bed for several minutes. I continued to hold his swollen hand as I thought about the mental and physical pain that he suffered with two major heart operations within six weeks.

Then I whispered, “You read my first chapters. You know that Pa told me that he was trying to sell fruits and vegetables to the guys at Hedges because they would not last until Monday. Why did it take him so long?”

Joe, still drowsy from his pain medication replied, “Fred, after all these years, I cannot believe that you are so naïve. He wasn’t selling fruits and vegetables. He was gambling. I thought you knew. He was shooting dice while I played the pinball machines. Sometimes when he was having bad luck, he would say, ‘Here, Joe, you shoot for me.’ At the public market restaurant in the morning, I played the pinball machine while he played the coin-operated gambling machines.”

My first thoughts were concerns for Joe. I thought, “I should be letting him rest.” I sat back in my seat, watching him taking deep breaths into his breathing device, and I remained silent.

He fell into a deep sleep. The nurse came in to check on him and asked me to leave. As I walked past the nurse’s station and down the hallway of the hospital, I wandered into an empty waiting room. I suddenly was in shock. The little boy in my seventy-two-year-old body came alive.

In the previous chapters of my book, I had credited my warden-father for the lessons I learned on the truck. How can two people, like Joe and I, share the same experiences and view them so differently? My father had given me the motivation to make my Prison-Truck into a study center to escape the Prison of the Truck, and now I have learned that he deceived me—he was gambling, not selling fruits and vegetables to wayward husbands.

When I was in the U.S. Navy, I wrote to him in gratitude for the lessons I learned on the truck and the sacrifices he made to support our family. He even took one of my Father’s Day letters and had it published in the local newspaper. He carried a clipping of this letter in his wallet for years. I had this image of a warden-father who worked long hours to support his family. Yes, my mother feared his temper. Yes, as a father, he was strict with his daughters. Yes, he physically hurt my mother on two occasions that I was aware of, but I always felt sorrow for his struggle to support his family in those Great Depression years.

At Hedges Bar and Grill, he told me, "I must get rid of the leftover fruits and vegetables before they spoil."

That is why I had to spend four long, lonely hours in the back of that truck on Saturday nights, out in front of the Hedges Bar. I believed him and I trusted him. He lied to me and betrayed me. I was so stupid. I was a weakling for not following him into the bar like Joe did. I felt the anger race through my body. It cut fast and deep into my soul. In the quiet of that empty hospital waiting room, I broke down and cried uncontrollably; this seventy-two-year-old man cried like a baby. My own father had betrayed me.

I walked around the different levels of the hospital parking lot in a daze, looking for the car that I had rented, forgetting what it looked like. In Rochester, I was staying with my son Fritz, Kelley, his wife, and their one-year old son Frederick William III. After about thirty minutes of walking in circles in the parking area, one level then another, I finally found the car. I drove toward Fritz's home on Landing Road in Rochester. Instead of turning right on Landing Road, I turned an immediate left onto East Avenue and pulled into the parking lot of The Friendly Home, which was the nursing home where my mother died eight months earlier, at age ninety-five.

It was about 10:00 P.M. In the chill of a sharp November wind, I stood outside the window of the room where my mother had died. I thought of her difficult life with my father. I recalled the many arguments between my mother and father, mostly spoken in Arabic, which I never understood. His voice was usually harsh and angry. Her voice was usually soft and gentle. I reflected for a moment on his moods around the house. He would be cheerful one day and depressed the next. The pieces of my puzzling childhood were falling into place. Maybe, I thought, my father would be cheerful when he won, and he would be depressed when he lost. I thought about how my mother must have worried about whether or not she would have the money to buy groceries and pay the bills. I could only imagine how much she suffered because of his gambling. I thought about how she *defended* him after he dragged her across the kitchen floor by her hair, when I was just a young boy. Was my father's anger toward her caused by his agony in gambling losses as well as her questions about the money that she needed to take care of our home?

I remembered that late in 1949, my father warned me that he would die of a heart attack within a few months. He *made* me promise to take care of my mother, brothers, and sisters. He did die exactly two months later. He was sitting in the back room of Hershey's Smoke Shop on East Avenue with either a deck of cards or a pair of dice in his hands. How prophetic! Now I knew. He was not playing cards for fun. He was gambling. All that time, he was gambling. He wasn't having coffee in the morning at the public market restaurant while I waited for him in the truck. He was gambling on that

pinball machine in the restaurant. He wasn't selling fruits and vegetables to the guys at the bar for four hours on Saturday nights. He was shooting dice.

When I escaped from the truck at age fourteen and found a job that paid five times the minimum wage, saving every penny for four years to buy my mother a home, like the home *he* lost—he was gambling. How could he let his own son shoulder his responsibility of taking care of *his* family? With every toss of the dice, he was throwing away the money that our family needed to live on. How could he do that?

I recalled another happening when I was twelve years old and on my Prison-Truck. I saw him empty his wallet, dollar by dollar. He lost it all in a crap game on the cold cement floor in the back of a truck repair garage over on Clinton Avenue. When it was over, he realized that I had been watching him. Almost in tears, he lectured me on the evils of gambling. “If you win, you take the food out of the mouths of the loser’s family. If you lose, the winner takes the food out of the mouths of your family.”

He made me feel that what I saw him do in that garage was a one-time event and I believed him. He *acted* so sincere and I believed him. It was all a cover-up, so I would never suspect that he was gambling. All those years in the public market and in Hedges Bar and Grill, he deceived me. In fact, when the sailors on board our ship shot dice, the example of my father’s loss in that Rochester repair garage caused me to stay away from any gambling on board our ship. The anguish that I remembered in my father’s face when he had lost his entire day’s earnings in the truck repair garage was still fresh in my memory. No way would I want to hurt myself, my family, or another person, or his family in gambling.

I thought back about all of those things after leaving brother Joe’s hospital room. On that cold 1998 November evening, standing outside of the nursing home where my mother died, I again cried uncontrollably and cried out loud,

“Pa, how could you do this to mother and me? How could you?”

I left the nursing home and slowly drove the rest of the way back to Fritz’s house. I noticed that only the porch light was on as I pulled into driveway. It was about 11:00 P.M. and my little grandson Freddie was sound asleep. Fritz had waited up for me, and as always, he gave me a hug good night. I never said a word to him about the evening’s events. I shuffled down the hallway to the guest room. I was emotionally drained. I flopped into bed and fell sound asleep within minutes.

The next day I visited my sister Anne and her husband Bill, who were my mother’s caretakers for the last fifteen years of her life. After having dinner, I tried to talk to Anne about my visit to the hospital to see Joe.

I could not talk about it without breaking down and crying. Anne understood. She tried to console and comfort me, but my hurt was too deep.

I got into the car and headed back to Fritz's place. Later that evening before bed, I tried to remain calm as I told Fritz and Kelley about my shocking discovery. Again, I could not control my feelings. Kelley got up from her chair and put her arms around me as I tried to tell them how deeply I was hurt, how I had almost finished my book and how difficult it would be to finish it, knowing that my father was not the man I thought he was.

Kelley reminded me what, as an employer, I already knew. Gambling is a disease, like alcohol and drugs. Yet, I felt hurt, anger, and pain. How, I thought, could I ever finish my autobiography, *Prisoner of the Truck*, with this discovery of my father's addiction?

Early the next morning, after assurances that brother Joe's heart operation was a success, I met Richard (Dr. Sarkis) at the airport for our return trip to Florida. I told him about the disturbing revelations I had learned from Joe. Richard was not surprised. He said that many of the relatives knew that my father was a gambler. Richard shared some of his experiences working with patients with all forms of addictions. He said it would take time for me to heal and find peace and forgiveness. I knew this would be especially difficult because my father was already gone. I couldn't talk to him about it.

At sixty-seven, Dr. Sarkis was a survivor of heart by-pass surgery. He even survived the hepatitis that developed after the surgery. He was also a survivor of prostate cancer, colon cancer, and surgery related to severe spinal related problems. In his practice, he had to deal with patients involved with drug, alcohol, and gambling addictions. By his own diagnosis, he was a walking miracle. So, I listened to my cousin. I listened carefully to every word Richard said about "gambling addictions."

The next day, while checking my e-mail, I found this November 18, 1998 message from my son Fritz:

Dear Dad,

I will pass your thank-you along to Kelley. She felt badly that she didn't get to see you in the morning before you left. I guess we didn't realize your flight left so early. Anyhow, you are always welcome to stay at our house. You must be the easiest house guest on earth . . . Cheerios, bananas, milk, coffee, Ovalteen, and a bed. No problem—we have all of that stuff every day. Next time, bring Grandma with you. It was wonderful to see you. I'm sorry we didn't get to visit more, and I'm very sorry about Uncle Richard's condition. It must be very difficult for him and his loved ones, including you.

I have thought a lot about you and your father, the grandfather I never knew. I believe there is nothing wrong with the way you feel right now. Being locked in the truck was definitely a form of child abuse. The memories that haunt you are real, and you cannot blame yourself for the way you feel about those cold nights in the truck. The abuse you suffered, however, was from a man with an addiction. Gambling is a proven addiction. People put their addictions before the ones they love. To overcome addictions, people need help from professionals. Your father did not have the opportunity to get help.

I'm sure your father wanted desperately to be a good father and provider. His illness got in the way. You, being the oldest son, and Grandma were exposed more than anyone else to his weaknesses. Your father loved you very much. Why else would he have lectured you about getting an education? He wanted you to have a better life than he had. Why did he come to you when he knew he was dying? Because he knew you could take care of the family. He trusted and loved you as much as he trusted and loved anyone or anything. I'm sure he is very proud of the way you took control and became a provider for the last fifty-plus years.

So, in my opinion, it is OK to feel the way you feel about those years on the truck. But you must understand your father was human and, unfortunately, had an addiction that affected the way he treated the ones he loved. It is good to talk about it, and eventually, you will forgive your father. Always remember, he loved you, your brothers and sisters, and Grandma very much. Please give our love to Mom and tell her we miss her.

Love, Fritz

This was my e-mail reply to Fritz:

November 19, 1998

Fritz, my son,

It was such a joy to hug and hold little Frederick William III. I am so glad that I shared my pain with you and Kelley. By sharing, I keep learning. Kelley held me as I cried. She gave me comfort with her words. I had no idea that Kelley's father had a similar, if not worse, situation with his father. As I told you, I do not dwell on this daily. It is only when I talk or write about it with family or friends that I break down and cry. For example, when Cousin Richard and I flew back to Florida this week, he said, "Didn't he pat you on the head or give you a hug during those long winter evening hours when he came to the truck to get fruits and vegetables?"

Richard's question made me feel worse. Your grandfather was so overwhelmed with his gambling losses that he did not know I was even in the

truck. He did not show me a bit of concern or affection. Not one word. Not one hug. Not one pat on the head.

Your message was sensitive. It helps free me of guilt for the anger that I have been feeling toward him. It reminds me that a gambling addiction can cause one to 'put their addiction before the ones they love.' Yet, I am still having trouble understanding, even with his gambling addiction, how he could see me in the bitter cold, huddled next to a kerosene lamp in the back of that truck, and have no compassion. He made his son a prisoner of his addiction. On winter Saturday nights, at Hedges Bar & Grill, there were times in those four hours, when he didn't open the back of the locked truck. Were those the days he won in gambling? When he did open the truck about once every hour, were those the days that he gambled away his entire day's receipts? After losing his cash, was he paying off gambling debts with his produce? Is that when he seemed in a daze when he opened the locked truck to take out fruits and vegetables into the bar—right in front of my eyes? Did the addiction blind him to my existence?

I did not talk to my mother about this. I was aware that she had her hands full of her children as well as his behavior. That is really the answer to your questions as to, "Why didn't she get involved?" or "Why didn't she tell my father's brothers, Charlie and George or Uncle Deeb, the eldest Sarkis?"

In those days, all relatives who lived close by would get involved with the happiness of each other's children. I never complained to anyone, even my mother. Why? Because I thought my father was working hard to support his larger family. I did not know he was gambling. I felt compassion for his long hours and hard work.

I am touched that you want me to think about forgiving him. How do I forgive a thirty-nine year-old intelligent Christian father, a leader in his church, who forced me to be on a truck for one hundred hours a week, when I was really not needed at all? How do I forgive a father who locked me in the back of that truck for four hours on winter nights while he gambled? How do I forgive a father who never offered me a hot breakfast in the morning or a hot dinner in the evening because he did not want his son to see him gambling? How do I forgive a father, when an addiction blinds him to the needs and loneliness of a son he locked in the back of a winter prison? What if I fell asleep in the back of that truck and kicked the kerosene lamp over? How would I have gotten out? Did he ever give that a thought? Would an addiction blind him to this possibility? My God, I was a small boy of eight when it started and it lasted for seven years. How do I forgive all of this? How do I?

I peeked through the window of Hedges one time. I saw him with the round leather container in his hand throwing dice. I saw him carry out the pinball machine from the public market restaurant. I saw him playing cards on Sundays with the men of the parish. As a young child, I thought all of this

was his form of recreation. In the bar, I thought that was his way of making a friend before he made a sale. With his lies and deceit, he took cruel advantage of my innocence and trusting nature. Indeed, what he did was a form of child abuse. Sometimes I think I would have rather suffered a mild beating for a half hour every day and had the rest of the day free.

Can you believe that when your seventy-two year-old father allows himself to think and write these words, he becomes that little boy all over again, and he breaks down and cries? Indeed, the strawberry-selling lesson and his five-minute lecture on education helped me to study and eventually escape the Truck-Prison. I doubt that I would have achieved what I did, had it not been for those three brief lessons of strawberries, empty baskets, and the Golden Rule.

I did study in the cold like Abe Lincoln, under the lights of that kerosene lamp, to earn my freedom. Using the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I did take my suffering experience and use it to help mold my character. I know there was, and continues to be, much good that came from my boyhood prison. This I celebrate. I will need more time to “celebrate” my forgiveness, if that time should ever come.

I am very proud of our entire family, and I want all of them to know it. For this reason, I have shared your correspondence and my reply with all of them. I know you are all loving parents. I hope my experience will make all of you even "more" loving in your relationships with family, relatives, and friends.

Your loving Dad

Questions a teacher or a mentor should ask a child:

1. In your opinion, why didn't Fred's father let him go into Hedges Bar and Grill like he did Joe?

2. Why do you think that Fred didn't tell his father that he did not want to stay in the back of the truck?

3. Do you think that Fred's father was wrong for not telling him about his addiction to gambling? Why?

4. Describe the differences between Fred and Joe?

5. How did Fred's responsibilities as the oldest son differ from those of his brothers and sisters?

Students - Talk to your parents or mentor about the following:

6. Have your parents or mentors ever had a shocking discovery? How did they deal with it?

1. How did your parents or mentors get along with their parents?

2. What is one thing parents and kids could do in order to get along better?

3. Is it okay for people to cry, especially men? Why? or Why Not?

Chapter 10 – Why Pa? Why?

In 1999, after the discovery of my father's addiction, I put the draft of my book, *Prisoner of the Truck* aside. I was confused. Should I leave it alone or go back to all the chapters that I had written and rewrite them in light of this new discovery? I simply did not know how to end the book, so I put the unfinished book aside.

After my e-mail to Fritz, Kelley, and my family, I focused my attentions on the Senior Tennis Tournaments in Florida. My goal was to go from being ranked number ten to number one in the state of Florida and possibly to first in the nation. I had fun playing competitive tennis and making new friends, but something was missing in my desire, drive, and determination. I came nowhere near achieving my new goal.

Anytime I spoke of my father's addiction to relatives or friends, I became very sad and depressed. I tried putting it out of my mind. I just could not finish *Prisoner of the Truck*.

One of the people that I played tennis with in Florida just happened to be a school teacher at Palmetto High School in Palmetto, Florida. His name was Rick Born. Rick really loved and cared about all children and he had a family of his own. He once was a Roman Catholic priest, but he left his position to marry, and later became a teacher. One day after tennis, Rick asked me about the book I was writing. He loved the strawberry and empty basket story. He wanted me to tell my life's story to his class. He believed I could turn it into a motivational talk, to help kids believe in themselves and to help them achieve their goals and dreams in life.

I spoke to Rick's class. This was my first talk with kids in 1999. I was introduced as the man who was writing a book called *Prisoner of the Truck*.

Dressed as a tramp-clown, my talk begins with a five-minute act to music—an act with an important message. While the music plays, the clown attempts to walk a tight rope attached to two children's chairs. The clown uses a small net and a small umbrella, the size of a dinner plate, in case he falls. He falls. He becomes very, very sad. He then finds a way to turn his failure to success. He stretches the rope on the ground to make it straight and, with great joy and his head held high, he walks and dances on the rope. His audience gets the message. "When life hands you a failure, you find a way to turn that failure into success," or "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."



After the clown act, I shared stories and lessons learned on my truck-prison, similar to the stories in this book. The response from students and teachers was very positive. Later that day, Herb Tschappat, the school principal, asked me to speak to the entire school, because he felt his students needed to hear my message in character development. The student population was about one-third African-American, one-third Hispanic, and one-third white.

On April 28, 29, and 30, 1999, in morning and afternoon classes, I gave twelve motivational talks to 1,200 high school students. According to the comments and responses I got, teachers and students felt my story was one that needed to be shared with others. Many of the kids said that they saw the importance of enthusiasm and a positive attitude in becoming the best that they could possibly be. They realized that these were important skills that they could use for the rest of their lives.

I never spoke of my father's addiction in any of these talks. I felt that this would be a distraction to my message.

In May of 1999, my wife and I returned to Rochester. Shortly thereafter, I received a phone call from Jim Roman, a member of the Tennis Club of Rochester. He had heard about my talks in Florida and he asked if I would speak to about forty men who were active in mission work in the Rochester area and beyond. So, I went to the Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford, New York, which is a suburb of Rochester.

I performed the clown act and spoke to that group of men on June 15, 1999. I sat on a tall stool in the chapel to speak to the group. I gave a talk similar to the one that I gave to the students in Florida. I spoke of my childhood experiences that led to low self-esteem. I told them about the cold winter nights in the back of the truck and the strawberry lesson from my father that helped me overcome my shyness. I told them how, with practice, I

became an enthusiastic and very successful twelve-year-old salesman. I told the story of the empty baskets that I did not want to retrieve from the third floor of that apartment on East Avenue. I talked about the pivotal and highly emotional five-minute conversation with my father that led me to believe that the only way I could ever be free of the Prison was to use the back of that truck as a place to study. I spoke of my Spiritual Partner, who, throughout my life, in good times and bad times, encouraged me to use the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gift of courage.

During the question and answer period, someone asked when *Prisoner of the Truck*, would be published. To answer the question, I told the story about visiting my brother Joe and the discovery of my father's addiction. I said that this discovery discouraged me from publishing this book.

When I spoke to these men of the pain of my discovery, I lost control of my feelings. I could not find my voice. Tears flooded my eyes and ran down my cheeks. I held my hand up to prevent anyone from coming forward to comfort me. I was embarrassed. In that chapel, for the first time since my discovery, I found myself saying out loud, in a hurt and angry voice, "He stole my childhood. He stole my childhood." My talk ended on that note.

In a matter of seconds, I was surrounded by many of the men in attendance. They patted me on the shoulder and praised my talk. Some of the men spoke of various addictions in their own families. Others said that in time I would heal and eventually I would forgive my father. They prayed that this would happen.

After sharing my story, Deacon Mike Piehler knew I was still in pain from the discovery of my father's gambling addiction. He suggested that I speak with Dr. Dennis Boike, a counselor in Canandaigua, about finishing my autobiography and dealing with the recent discovery of my father's gambling addiction.

On July 27, 1999, at seventy-three years of age, I made my first appointment ever with a counselor. I met with Dr. Boike in his office. He had me tell him my life's story, from boyhood to the shocking discovery of my father's addiction. Again, when I spoke of the loneliness and anguish I experienced in the back of that truck on those bitter-cold Saturdays, I lost control of my feelings. I had difficulty finding my voice, and I could not control my emotions. I just couldn't speak without crying.

Dr. Boike explained that treatment programs for drug, alcohol, and gambling addictions did not exist in the years when I was a prisoner of the truck. He said that my father had an illness and there was no treatment for that illness in those days. He said that of all the addictions, gambling was the most difficult illness to cure. The addiction was so serious, that when my

father opened the back of the truck and did not see me, it was part of the illness.

On August 19, 1999, I met with Dr. Boike again. Dr. Boike said something similar to what Fritz had written to me a few months earlier. “The abuse you endured was dealt out by a man with an addiction. Gambling is a proven addiction. People put their addictions before the ones they love. To overcome addictions, usually professional intervention is required. Your father did not have the opportunity to get help. I'm sure your father wanted desperately to be a good father and provider. His illness got in the way.”

I tried to understand. I wanted to understand. But every time I looked back on my childhood prison, I felt anger and pain.

Questions a teacher or a mentor should ask a child:

1. How did speaking to the group of men, help Fred with his anger and frustration?

2. Why do you think Fred’s father locked him in the back of the truck?

3. How does crying help with your emotions?

Students - Talk to your parents or mentors about the following:

1. Have your parents or mentor been affected by another person's addiction?

2. What are your parent's goals in life?

3. If your parents or mentor could talk to you about any topic, what would it be? What would they say?

Chapter 11 – The Brown Envelope

On August 20, 1999, I saw Dr. Boike again. We talked about the 325-page draft of *Prisoner of the Truck* that I had written before the discovery of my father's addiction. Dr. Boike said that I should not change what I had already written. Instead, he suggested that I find a way to forgive and make peace with my dead father and finish my book. (It's rather difficult to settle something with someone when they're not even alive.) For all those years before my discovery, I had put my boyhood prison out of my mind, thinking that my father was a hard-working victim of the Depression. After all, I thought, he was a prisoner of that truck, six days a week, all year long. Discovering that he was also a victim of an addiction changed my thinking. It caused me to relive the childhood that I now felt was stolen from me. I tried to lose the pain. I tried to forget about it, but I just couldn't. I just couldn't. I didn't know how I would ever find peace with his memory.

Just before my hour with Dr. Boike was up, in the last few minutes, I found myself saying to him,

"OK, so my father had an addiction and those were the days when help was not available, but tell me, Doctor, why would a man with an addiction drag his son into his addiction by locking him up in the back of a truck in the dead of winter for four hours, while he gambled? Addiction or not, this was not an impulsive act, unlike anger in the spur of the moment. This was deliberate. This was planned. This was heartless. This was cruel. This was repeated Saturday after Saturday, winter after winter."

"My God, Dr. Boike," I yelled out, "Why didn't he let me spend my own nickel to take a trolley home while he fed his addiction? How can I forgive him for that?"

Dr. Boike saw my deep pain. Very concerned, he said, "Fred, Fred, if you took a trolley home, your mother would wonder where your father was. You were his cover. I've got another patient waiting. Tell you what—schedule an appointment with my secretary, and we'll talk about this at our next meeting."

I was stunned! In shock, without stopping at the desk for another appointment, I walked out the doctor's office feeling worse than when I walked in. I was a "cover" for my father's addiction. I had never given this a thought. I now felt used, betrayed, and violated. I headed home feeling sad, very sad.

When I got back home, I thought back to the time when I was twenty-four years old, sitting out in the back yard, looking for a shooting star to help me decide what I should do with the rest of my life. I remembered my father coming out into that back yard forty-eight years ago. That was the night that my father told me that he only had a few months to live—the night

that he asked me to take care of my mother and my younger brothers and sisters.

I walked out onto the balcony of our condominium overlooking peaceful Canandaigua Lake. It was a dark night, but the sky was filled with millions of twinkling stars. With tears in my eyes, I found myself looking up at the sky and spoke out loud. “OK, Pa, show me a shooting star and I will accept it as your apology for the pain and strife you have caused in my life. You stole my childhood, you really did. They say that you were suffering from an illness, an addiction to gambling. I want to see your shooting star, Pa. If I do, I will envision your words trailing behind it: “I’m sorry, Fred, for the pain and hurt I caused you and your mother. I’m sorry for how I have messed up your childhood. I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

I waited for over half an hour, but just like before, there were no shooting stars, not one. I went to bed praying that I would find a way to forgive him, a way to finish my book, a way to get on with my life.

The very next day was August 21, 1999, my little brother Joe’s sixty-ninth birthday. I strolled out to the mailbox and discovered a large, brown envelope. I noticed that the return address was from Palmetto High School in Palmetto, Florida. Inside the envelope were letters from 122 students and six teachers. I tore open the package and began reading them, one by one. As I finished reading them on the balcony of our condominium overlooking beautiful Canandaigua Lake, an unexplainable calm came over me.



Brown envelopes full of hug-letters from kids and teachers

The letters in the large, brown envelope seemed to speak to me. I envisioned my father standing over me, with his hands cupped around his mouth saying,

“Oh, now there you go again feeling sorry for yourself, as you did when you were on the truck. Fred, my son, I know you did not see a shooting star last night. Yet, a few hours later, you received a large, brown envelope from the teachers and kids in Florida. In your life, you have learned the lessons of honesty, patience, enthusiasm, and education. Those lessons helped you to turn your mistakes and failures into success.

You served people with food and refreshments in their place of work. You built a fun village and a big ski mountain for people to enjoy. You have earned many awards for your successes in business. You received high honors for your service to others in your community. I died before you married Helen. I never got to see my grandchildren, Gina, Greg, Wade, Fritz, and Josh. God blessed your family with happy marriages and you now have twelve healthy and happy grandchildren of your own. All of your children are successful entrepreneurs. You are close to your loving brothers, sisters, relatives and friends.

So, listen to me son. You have a new volunteer mission in life. You must finish and publish Prisoner of the Truck and a digest called Yes Pa. You will give talks to kids and adults. You will build a national website and a not-for-profit foundation to help kids with character development, so they can succeed in life. You will seek the help of parents and teachers in your mission. I know you’re a little upset with me, but where would you be without the lessons I taught you? Remember son, the strawberry lesson, the empty basket lesson, the Golden Rule, and honesty lessons.

My life was not easy, son. My gambling addiction caused me as much suffering and loss as it did you and your mother. So stop your pain and get on with the good work you do with kids. And here’s a thought for you. Treat all the letters you receive from children and teachers, both now and in the future, as the hugs you never got from me. Above all, know that I always loved you and please forgive me, my son, as your mother has. Do you hear me? Do you hear me?”

Clutching the brown envelope, with love for my father and forgiveness in my heart, and with tears streaming down my face, I looked up into the sky, and one last time I said,

“Yes Pa!”



My wife Helen, our children, their spouses, and our grandchildren.
2006 photo. Background Canandaigua Lake, NY at Bristol Harbour Village

Questions a teacher or a mentor should ask a child:

1. How did Fred get to the place where he could forgive his father for the abuse he had suffered as a child?

2. In Fred's lifetime, did Fred's father help him or hurt him more? Would Fred be the person he is today without his father?

3. Describe a time in your life when you had to forgive someone.

Students - Talk to your parents or mentors about the following:

1. Have your parents or mentor ever felt like someone was talking to them and giving them good advice? What was the advice and did they follow it? How?

2. Have your parents or mentor ever had to forgive someone? What helped them to do that?

3. Name three things that your parents or mentor want to be remembered for?

APPENDICES

*** Prisons Without Bars**

*** Prescription for Living the Good Life**

*** Glossary of Vocabulary Words**

*** A message from Fred.**

PRISONS WITHOUT BARS

A prison does not have to have bars to be a prison. In the *World Book Dictionary*, one of the definitions for “prisoner” is: “A person who is kept shut up against his (or her) will or is not free to move.” Under this definition a prisoner can be a person:

- who has a poor self-image about his or her race, creed, color, religion, weight, lifestyle, or appearance
- who lives with a single parent, wishing for both parents in the home
- who, when tempted to use drugs, cannot learn to say, “Not now, not ever.”
- who must live with a loved one who is addicted to drugs, alcohol, or gambling
- who has endured some form of heart-breaking child abuse
- who is addicted to electronic games and overuse of the computer that steals time from study, self-improvement, or helping others
- who fails to accept responsibility for bad behavior, placing the blame on others
- who fails to set goals
- who lacks the drive, determination, and enthusiasm needed to develop good habits that can lead to success and happiness
- who cannot adapt to big changes in life
- who fails to hug the hidden power within, and with God’s help, to become the best he or she can be
- who gives up when he or she makes mistakes or fails
- who hasn’t learned how to love and forgive
- who values rich possessions more than rich character
- who doesn't realize the freedom of living and practicing the Golden Rule

If you feel you are in some form of prison, “shut up against your will and not free to move,” I pray that this book will help you to find the key to freedom, success, happiness, and peace of mind in all you say or do.

Prescription for Living the Good Life*

1. Treat others as you would like to be treated. (The Golden Rule)
2. Be honest; do not lie, cheat or steal; make your word your bond.
3. Treat life with care; avoid risky behavior.
4. Show respect for legitimate authority—parents, teachers, police and government.
5. Do not let physical or mental abuse go unnoticed.
6. Read books—regularly.
7. Be tolerant of others' beliefs.
8. Express honor, love, and respect for your family.
9. Make a commitment to continue education throughout your life.
10. Show respect for all life—human and animal.
11. Avoid violence, practice nonviolence, support peace.
12. Celebrate our differences—gender, race, religion, background, appearance, and disabilities.
13. Seek knowledge, wisdom, and truth.
14. Practice health control; exercise your mind and body.
15. Do not abuse your body; avoid tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.
16. Help those who are suffering or in need.
17. Avoid pregnancy until you are ready to become a parent.
18. Expect to make your own way in life.
19. Practice charity.
20. Respect the environment.

My sister Vicky, mother of five and grandmother of eleven, said: “Fred, if adults and kids embraced these 20 prescriptions, what a wonderful world this would be.”

* Thanks to Rudy Kachmann, MD, Behavioral Foundation, Ft. Wayne, IN. Dr. Kachmann is a neurosurgeon who has practiced medicine for over 34 years. His foundation helps disadvantaged kids. I had the good fortune to meet Dr. Kachmann during the Super Senior Tennis Tournament held in Naples, FL in early 2004.

GLOSSARY OF VOCABULARY WORDS

A

- abating(26)Reducing in amount, degree, or intensity; lessen.
- addiction(93) ..The condition of being habitually or compulsively occupied with or involved in something.
- adversity(78) ..A state of hardship or affliction; misfortune.
- anguish(86)Excruciating or acute distress, suffering, or pain
- assassinated(74)....murder (a prominent person) by surprise attack, as for political reasons
- assurances(87) ...A statement or indication that inspires confidence; a guarantee or pledge
- audit(64).....An official examination and verification of accounts and records, esp. of financial accounts

B

- Being Up Front With Mistakes(62).....**Admit the error, make corrections, and move on
- betrayed(85) ...To lead astray; deceive.
- bland(26)Not highly flavored; mild; tasteless

- bushels(20).....A round container with the capacity of four pecks

C

- chicken pox(17)A mild but highly contagious disease, caused by a virus and characterized by slight fever and the eruption of blisters on the skin. Chicken pox is classified as a disease of childhood, although it can occur in adults.
- choices(61).....**Alternatives.
- cigar box(13)..a box for holding cigars, typically the size of a textbook
- cinder(11).....A burned or partly burned substance, such as coal, that is not reduced to ashes but is incapable of further combustion.
- clambered(31) To climb with difficulty, especially on all fours; scramble.
- commotion(31).....An agitated disturbance; a hubbub
- compassion(39, 55, 89)**a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.

condominiums(75).....A
building or complex in
which units of property,
such as apartments, are
owned by individuals
and common parts of
the property, such as the
grounds and building
structure, are owned
jointly by the unit
owners.

confirm(75)to establish the
truth, accuracy, validity,
or genuineness of;
corroborate; verify

Confirmation(33)a rite
administered to
baptized persons, in
some churches as a
sacrament for
confirming and
strengthening the
recipient in the
Christian faith, in others
as a rite without
sacramental character
by which the recipient
is admitted to full
communion with the
church.

confront(41) ...deal with
(something unpleasant)
head on.

consecutive(64)..Following one
after another without
interruption; successive;
following one after the
other in order

consequences(26)....Something
that logically or
naturally follows from
an action or condition; a
result

console(87).....to alleviate or
lessen the grief, sorrow,
or disappointment of;
give solace or comfort
convictions(47)fixed or
firm beliefs.

correspondence(90)...com-
munication by the
exchange of letters; the
letters written or
received.

counsel(37).....exchange
advice, ideas, or
opinions

courage(33) ...the quality of
mind or spirit that
enables a person to face
difficulty, danger, pain,
etc., without fear;
bravery.

craned(54)to stretch out
one's neck, esp. to see
better.

crap game(86) a game in which
two dice are thrown and
in which a first throw of
7 or 11 wins, a first
throw of 2, 3, or 12
loses, and a first throw
of 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, or 10
can be won only by
throwing the same
number again before
throwing a 7.

culinary(64)....Of or relating to
a kitchen or to cookery.

D

daze(85).....A stunned or
bewildered condition.

deceived(84)...Caused to
believe what is not true;
misled.

defied(37).....Challenged the power of; resisted boldly or openly:
 dejected(35)....depressed in spirits; disheartened; low-spirited
 deliberate(98) .carefully weighed or considered; studied; intentional
 detection(77) ..the perception that something has occurred or some state exists; "early detection can often lead to a cure;" the act of detecting something; catching sight of something
 devoured(72) ..To destroy, consume, or eat up greedily.
 dictated(54)to say or read aloud something to be written down by a person or recorded by a machine.
 digest(100)Previously published material, usually in edited or condensed form.
 distraction(94) that which distracts, divides the attention, or prevents concentration
discipline(47)..develop (children's) behavior by instruction and practice; especially to teach self-control

embraced(76) .Eager acceptance; to take or receive gladly or eagerly; accept willingly
 emotions(16) ..A psychological state that arises spontaneously rather than through conscious effort and is sometimes accompanied by physiological changes; a feeling.
empathy(77) ..Identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives.
 endured(22)to bear without resistance or with patience; tolerated
enthusiasm(35, 61)....Great excitement for or interest in a subject or cause; overflowing with eager enjoyment or approval
 entrepreneur(60).....someone who organizes a business venture and assumes the risk for it
 envision(99) ...To picture in the mind; imagine.
 ethnic(44)pertaining to or characteristic of a people, esp. a group (ethnic group) sharing a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, or the like.

E

embark(72).....To go on board a vessel or a boat for a voyage; begin

F

faith and belief(62).confidence or trust in a person or thing, or a higher power; the theological virtue defined as secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God's will.

flat(44)An apartment on one floor of a building.

floorboards(24)The floor of a motor vehicle.

fortitude(33) ...mental and emotional strength in facing difficulty, adversity, danger, or temptation courageously

foundation(100).....an institution financed by a donation or legacy to aid research, education, the arts, etc.; an endowment for such an institution.

frigid(25)very cold in temperature

G

gaped(31)Stared, as in astonishment or with the mouth wide open.

gaping(20)A stare, as in astonishment or with the mouth wide open.

Golden Rule(39, 61) .a rule of ethical conduct, usually phrased “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,”

gratitude(63) .The state of being grateful; thankfulness.

grueling(30)....Physically or mentally demanding to the point of exhaustion

gruff(32)low and harsh; hoarse

H

honesty(61)....Truthfulness; sincerity; quality or condition of being honest; integrity.

housewives(14)A married woman who manages her own household, esp. as her principal occupation.

hucksters(21)..One who sells wares or provisions in the street; a peddler or hawker.

humiliate(33)..To lower the pride, dignity, or self-respect of.

husky(24)big and strong; burly.

I

icebox(10)An insulated cabinet or chest with a partition for ice, used for preserving or cooling food, beverages, etc.

imagination(62)the ability to form mental images of things or events; act or process of forming a conscious idea or mental image of something never before wholly perceived in reality by the one forming the images, also the ability or gift of

forming such conscious ideas or mental images especially for the purpose of artistic or intellectual creation....

impulsive(98) .done, or likely to act, suddenly, without careful thought

inherently(35).existing in someone or something as a permanent and inseparable element, quality, or attribute; from within

inspired(39)stimulated to action; motivated

integrity(64) ..Moral soundness; honesty; freedom from corrupting influence or motive

intercepted(74)To stop, deflect, or interrupt the progress or intended course of

intervention(96).....care provided to improve a situation (especially medical procedures or applications that are intended to relieve illness or injury)

intravenously(82)through or within a vein

instantaneously(35)
.....occurring, done, or completed in an instant

K

kamikaze pilots(54)....(during World War II) a member of a special corps in the Japanese

air force charged with the suicidal mission of crashing an aircraft laden with explosives into an enemy target, esp. a warship.

L

launched(72) ..To set going; initiate

lease(77).....a contract or instrument conveying property to another for a specified period or for a period determinable at the will of either lessor or lessee in consideration of rent or other compensation.

lentils(51)Leguminous plants having flat pods containing lens-shaped, edible seeds.

linoleum(12)...A hard, washable floor covering formed by coating burlap or canvas with linseed oil, powdered cork, and rosin, and adding pigments to create the desired colors and patterns.

luscious(32)....extremely pleasing to the sense of taste.

M

manicured(49) trimmed or cut meticulously

mansion(69) ...a very large, impressive, or stately residence.

marina(74).....A boat basin
that has docks,
moorings, supplies, and
other facilities for small
boats.

measles(17)An acute and
highly contagious viral
disease marked by
distinct red spots
followed by a rash;
occurs primarily in
children

mediocrity(40)ordinariness as a
consequence of being
average and not
outstanding

mockery(17)...Scornfully
contemptuous ridicule;
derision. A specific act
of ridicule or derision.

modest(37, 76)limited
or moderate in amount,
extent, etc

mortgage(60)..A legal
agreement by which a
sum of money is lent
for the purpose of
buying buildings, land
etc

mosey(21)To move in a
leisurely, relaxed way;
saunter.

motivational(93).....to
provide with a motive
(purpose) or serve as a
motive for

motivator(47) .One who
provides with an
incentive; moves to
action; impels.

muster(37)to gather,
summon, rouse

N

naïve(84)Lacking worldly
experience and
understanding; having
or showing a lack of
experience, judgment,
or information;
credulous

O

open communication(62)..The
exchange of thoughts,
messages, or
information, as by
speech, signals, writing,
or behavior.

oppressive(45)distressing or
grievous

overwhelmed(88)Affected
deeply in mind or
emotion

P

parishioners(27)Those
who belong to, or are
connected with, a
parish.

parole(22).....the conditional
release of a person from
prison prior to the end
of the maximum
sentence imposed; such
release or its duration.

parsnips(26)....A strong-
scented plant cultivated
for its long, white,
edible, fleshy root.

patience(26)...the quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like.

peck baskets(24).....basket holding a dry measure of 8 quarts; one fourth of a bushel

perseverance(75)steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state, etc., esp. in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement.

phase(74).....a distinct stage in a process of change or development

pivotal(95).....Being of vital or central importance; crucial

pocketknife(26)a knife with one or more blades that fold into the handle, suitable for carrying in the pocket.

podium(46).....An elevated platform, as for an orchestra conductor or public speaker; it gives prominence to the person on it

prematurely(13).....Born after a gestation period of less than the normal time; uncommonly early or before the expected time

premier(72)first in rank; chief; leading

pride(27).....the state or feeling of being proud.
prophetic(85)..foretelling events as if by divine inspiration.

R

rebates(64).....a return of part of the original payment for some service or merchandise; partial refund.

receipts(89)A quantity or amount received. Often used in the plural; meaning money taken in

reputation(64).A specific characteristic or trait ascribed to a person or thing; overall quality or character as seen or judged by people in general within a community

retrieve(95).....To find and carry back; fetch.

revelations(87)Things revealed or disclosed, esp. striking disclosures, as of things not before realized.

robust(34).....strong and healthy; hardy; vigorous; strongly or stoutly built

rutabagas(25)..A plant having a thick bulbous tan and purple root that is used as food; the edible root of this plant

S

sauntered(31)..Walked at a leisurely pace; strolled.
seldom(22)on only a few occasions; rarely; infrequently; not often
sensitive(89)...having acute mental or emotional sensibility; aware of and responsive to the feelings of others.
sidled(31)to move sideways; to edge along furtively.
sincere(86).....free of deceit, hypocrisy, or falseness; earnest; genuine; real
skeptical(39)...Marked by or given to doubt; questioning
spangled(59)...To sparkle, glittering
squalls(23).....A brief, sudden, violent windstorm, often accompanied by rain or snow.
stern(35)firm, strict, or uncompromising
strife(99).....A struggle; bitter conflict
subsided(38)...Became quiet, less active, or less violent; abated

T

tedious(48)Tiresome by reason of length, slowness, or dullness; boring.

telegram(46)...a message or communication sent by telegraph; a telegraphic dispatch.

toboggan(11)..a long, narrow, flat-bottomed sled made of a thin board curved upward and backward at the front, often with low handrails on the sides, used esp. in the sport of coasting over snow or ice.

tracer bullets(54)Also called tracer ammunition; ammunition containing a chemical substance that causes a projectile to trail smoke or fire so as to make its path visible and indicate a target to other firers, esp. at night.

trolley(11)a wheeled vehicle that runs on rails and is propelled by electricity

trudge(36).....to walk, esp. laboriously or wearily

truth(40)the true or actual state of a matter.

turnips(25).....A widely cultivated plant of the mustard family, having a small, fleshy, edible whitish-purple bulbous root; the root of this plant is eaten as a vegetable.

typewriter(45) A writing machine that produces characters similar to typeset print by means of a manually operated keyboard that actuates a set of raised types, which strike the paper through an inked ribbon.

U

understanding(39).....com-
prehension, intel-
ligence, discernment,
empathy, or the like

V

valedictorian(47).....a
student, usually the one
ranking highest
academically in a
school graduating class,
who delivers the
valedictory at the
commencement
exercises.

venture(71).....a commercial
undertaking that risks a
loss

veterans(58)....Persons who
have served in the
armed forces.

victim(98).....an unfortunate
person who suffers
from some adverse
circumstance; one who
is harmed by or made to
suffer from an act,
circumstance, agency,
or condition

W

warden(22).....A person
charged with the care or
custody of persons,
animals, or things;
keeper; the chief
administrative officer in
charge of a prison

wares(21).....Articles of
merchandise or
manufacture; goods that
are sold

washboard(10)A rectangular
board or frame,
typically with a
corrugated metallic
surface, on which
clothes are rubbed in
the process of washing.

.....

washtub(10)....a tub for use in
washing clothes, linens,
etc.

wayward(84) ..turned or
turning away from what
is right or proper;
willful; disobedient

wisdom(39)....ability to discern
or judge what is true,
right, or lasting; insight;
common sense; good
judgment

Y

yearned(25)To have a
strong, often
melancholy desire.

A Message from Fred

From age eight to age twelve, I had to work on my father's fruit and vegetable truck—100 hours a week, six days a week in the summer. I felt like a prisoner of that truck. Self-pity ruled my life.

At age twelve, three five-minute lessons from my Pa changed my attitude. What he taught me about selling strawberries boosted my confidence and self-esteem. I learned that failure could be turned around—that my success was related to my attitude and my enthusiasm.

The other two lessons gave me the motivation to study on the truck and to excel in whatever I did—using the Golden Rule as my banner. At age twelve, I realized that I could be the author of my own life story.

As human beings, we often become trapped in prisons of our own making—habits of self-pity, blaming others for our failures, addictions, or unhappiness. We lose ambition. We fail to set goals.

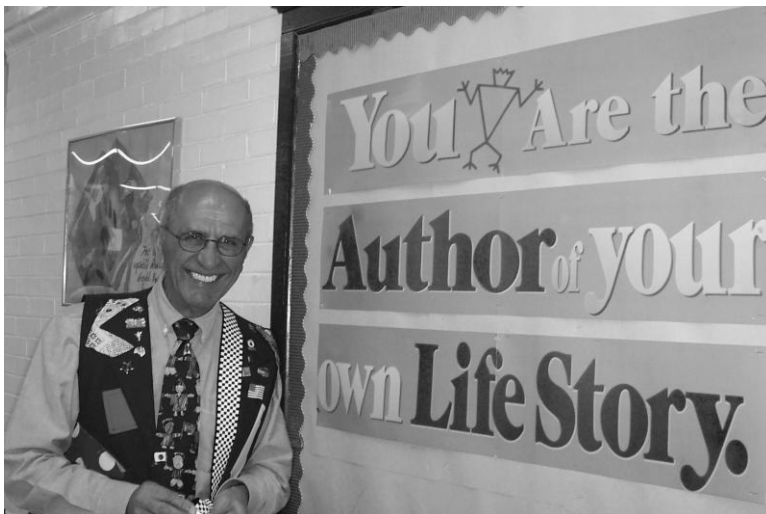
At age twelve, I realized that I was responsible for what I made of my life—no one else. I became a millionaire by the time I was thirty-four—then lost it all. But guided by my Pa's lessons and with faith in God and the encouragement of my family, I never gave up, and once again turned failure into success.

Now, at age eighty-one, I have a new mission in life—to inspire others to overcome whatever hardships they face.

Yes Pa will show you the secret of a happy life—how you, too, can develop a positive attitude, make the most of your gifts, and become the author of your own life story.

Visit
www.YesPa.org
for free downloads of
Yes Pa,
Teacher-Mentor Resource Guides,
Testimonial and Other Videos

E-mail Fred at
YesPaCares@aol.com



QUOTES FROM SOME OF THE HUNDREDS OF LETTERS FROM KIDS

"I know what it's like to have failures and triumphs to learn from. I've learned that following your heart with an open mind might be a rougher road to travel, but it's the only one I care to travel."

"I'm sorry you had to live that kind of life. I live somewhat similarly. I got abused a lot by my step-dad who would beat me up a lot. It was scary. I hated living like that. I really enjoyed your message. I think it touched some of us. It did me."

"I liked your strawberry story. It showed me enthusiasm and not to settle for less. It also showed me if you make a mistake in life, there's always a second chance."

"I now realize that in order for me to accomplish everything that I want in my life, I must think positive."

"Like you, I have grown up roughly and after listening to you, I am going to make something of my life. Thank you for your motivation."

"Your message gave me a clear picture of what education can do for you. The story of your childhood and determination to be the best you can be was an inspiration to me. I only hope that my education will bring me the happiness that yours has brought to you."

"Here are the lessons I learned—work hard, have patience, be determined."

"Your message spoke to me in a special way. I believe we all have 'trucks' to get off of in our lives. Your positive outlook on life has made me think more positively and less negatively."

"Everything you said hit home. I lost my father and mother at a young age. To hear about your experiences made me feel better about my situation. If there was anyone in the world to write about their life, I'm glad it was you."

"I loved your short stories. Selling strawberries or ideas—be enthusiastic. Have a disagreement on empty baskets or anything else with someone? Talk about it and try to see a different point of view. Having a problem in truth-telling or getting along with people? Practice till perfect the Golden Rule."

"Wow. Dude, you had a lot of problems, and you beat them all. Way to go! This is the best book I've ever read."