

A NEGOTIATOR'S
PLAYLIST

enabling moments

Larry H. Haber

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2 A Negotiator's Playlist

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WARNING: Prolonged exposure to *"Enabling Moments: A
Negotiator's Playlist"* may induce newfound life, career and
business perspectives; flashbacks to your own life experi-
ences; an eclectic taste in multiple music genres; and maybe,
just maybe, a bit of an Aretha Franklin-like R-E-S-P-E-C-T
and/or D-I-S-R-E-S-P-E-C-T for the author.

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The Prelude and Getting in Tune

Hopefully, the short stories that follow will entertain you while simultaneously imparting healthy doses of insight as to those life, business and negotiating mindsets and mantras that have played a starring role in achieving what I define success primarily to be: happiness.

The format for the stories I tell is set up in a manner similar to that of concerts performed by some of the San Francisco bands in the late '60s and early '70s. Think about jamming sets of music, prolonged intermissions to submerge oneself in whatever might, as my mother used to say, "soothe the savage beast" in you and/or to get your act together; and then if you were lucky enough, to have scored a backstage pass or been treated to a riveting round of encores to send you home with memories to last you a lifetime. Periodically, although normally performed before a concert to ensure that the sound in the venue is clear, or as a means of rehearsing a few tunes to be played that evening, a number of "soundchecks" are sprinkled in along the way as a mental gymnastics' intermezzo of some sort. Stated differently, they are intended to be thought-provoking while providing you with a moment to be reflective, much like you might experience at a concert.

Multiple long-winded prefaces behind us, this book contains an extraordinarily long first set running through October 25, 2001, which is then followed by an intermission, and a short acoustic set running into 2006. The musical notes of 2007 and 2008 bring on yet another intermission through the times after the Great Recession reared its ugly head in the fall of 2008. Lastly, a third set takes us

1 through and beyond the dark days of COVID-19 through late 2024.
2 Multiple encores and “one-hit wonders” follow, which hopefully
3 will continue to play well into the 2050s for me, along with your
4 very own backstage pass to the afterparty that is not only my mind
5 but a different slant on business and life as well.

6 Due homage and heartfelt appreciation out to a few songs by the
7 Grateful Dead aside, in my mind, not only has “The Music Never
8 Stopped” for me, but with the love and support of those near and
9 dear to me, metaphorically speaking, I fortunately continue to play
10 lead guitar in one of my favorite make-believe groups ... namely
11 that of “Uncle John’s Band.” Like many of us though, given the
12 “The Prelude” that is one’s life, getting in tune just took me a while
13 longer than expected.

14 With the foregoing as your general admission lawn pass to the
15 Grateful Dead-induced “Attics of My Life,” along with a bit of un-
16 intentional inspiration from Dire Straits, please enjoy the road trip
17 that is my “Walk of Life.”

18

Author's Introduction

There are those who might say that I have become somewhat of a “Commercial Leasing Interventionist” as a consequence of the wrath brought on by the Great Recession on what was once a real estate portfolio of roughly four million square feet. Although I still retain minuscule ownership interests in two of the properties on 125th Street in Harlem that were instrumental in my old firm’s rise before the fall from whatever level of real estate grace we had obtained, including that of the building where former President Clinton still retains his rectangle “oval” office that you and I as taxpayers pay for, I am no longer involved from a management or legal perspective in my old company. Politely stated, although we all received a nice check to play with when we sold 90 percent of our collective Harlem interests to a real estate fund in 2006, the majority of the windfall my partners and I received was invested, and thereafter sadly pissed away, in a town that when mentioned in my presence brings a small tear to my eye if you’re paying attention: Newark, New Jersey.

The story of my old company — Cogswell Realty Group — created by three friends, including myself, who grew up within five houses of one another; a junior high school pal; and a few newfound friends along the way; was truly a great story ... until it wasn’t. Despite the fact that it could’ve ended better, and to this day is a gift that too often is one which keeps taking away, I will always cherish the good times, the everlasting friendships made, the knowledge secured, and the life and business lessons secured along the way. In short, I am better for having lived through what truly was a seemingly endless series of epic experiences, notwithstanding that

1 ultimately, we took a B-52's like "Party Out of Bounds" wrong turn
2 or three. Moreover, I will forever be grateful for how Cogswell en-
3 abled me beforehand and more importantly, at the not so tender age
4 of nearly fifty years old, to find the road leading to the person, busi-
5 nessman and professional I have allegedly grown up to be.

6 Armed with a strong work ethic, street smarts, a passionate yet
7 relentless pursuit of the goal mindset, the ability to string a multi-
8 tude of syllables together without taking a breath, somewhat of an
9 encyclopedic knowledge of music, sports and pop culture, and a few
10 professional titles secured back when I was in my mid-20s, starting
11 in 2009, I was able to quite slowly crawl out from the wreckage of
12 having become a newly appointed member of the middle class. I
13 ultimately morphed into becoming a reformed yet long recovered
14 developer by not dwelling on what no longer was my ownership in-
15 terest in what once was a multi-million-square-foot real estate port-
16 folio. I had no choice but to get over it and deal. Would anyone care,
17 or respect me, if my daily routine became that of hanging out on the
18 corner of Kvetch Avenue and Whine Street, with a hunk of cheese
19 in my hand, telling anyone I could about my tale of woe? Not only
20 would that have been counterproductive, but it also wouldn't have
21 been good for anyone in my family.

22 For context, in late 2008 and early 2009, not only was the Great
23 Recession in full bloom, but it was also the time when our real estate
24 partnership truly ended, Bernie Madoff's devastating Ponzi scheme
25 came to light, and most importantly, my wife Joy had to endure a
26 series of surgeries to enable her to hopefully live to 100 and beyond.
27 And, oh yeah, our four boys were then fifteen, fifteen, fourteen and
28 nine, with the youngest in the early years of transitioning from at-
29 tending the absolutely life-changing Ascent School for Autism, to
30 that of the Syosset School District, which I attended as well.

31 No armed with a new set of rules and restrictions as my reluc-
32 tant guiding light, and playing off the title of the legendary Frank

Zappa's old band, I set out to become the father and mother of rein- 1
vention. What was the result, you may ask? First and foremost, I am 2
happy. You only go through life once, and whether right or wrong, 3
whenever confronted with the choice of making more money or be- 4
ing happy, the choice was always an easy one for me: happiness. Be 5
that as it may, in addition to the foregoing, I am a non-practicing 6
and retired CPA, a podcast host, the creator of an online commercial 7
lease training and negotiating educational platform called Leasing 8
REality, and a co-writer of a hip-hop single called "Leasing REality 9
State of Mind." And when I want to be a bit boring and pay the bills, 10
I run the commercial real estate practice for a bicoastal law firm 11
called Abrams Garfinkel Margolis Bergson, LLP. 12

What follows is not meant to be biographical in any way, shape 13
or form, although to most it will certainly feel as if it is. That is far 14
from my intent. Crazy as this may sound, I remember in vivid detail, 15
and with little or no revisionist history, the overwhelming major- 16
ity of "Enabling Moments" that I have experienced throughout my 17
journey. For those who know me, I am a storyteller who, more of- 18
ten than not, possesses a talent for making a short story longer. But 19
don't worry, my friends, I have taken the advice of those I am close 20
to, and consequently, I have not so painstakingly stuck to my game 21
plan. You can be the judge. 22

Given that I generally consider myself to be the biggest child in 23
almost any conversation, the book is intended for kids of all ages: 24
for teenagers through those not far away from taking life's big nap 25
at ninety-five years young or so. 26

To be clear, this is NOT a book about real estate, although like 27
Popeye but stated a bit differently for copyright concerns, I be what 28
I be. Rather, it is my "Negotiator's Playlist" for business and life. 29
With kudos to Paul McCartney, "With a Little Luck," it will allow 30
you to conjure up a few new songs to add to your very own self- 31
produced mixtape. 32

1 Growing up, I am fairly certain that many of you had a friend
2 who with a tendency to continually quote lines from movies or
3 songs as a conduit to getting their point across. For better or worse,
4 depending on your perspective, I was one of those people who often
5 called upon their treasure trove of meaningful or meaningless trivia.
6 The beauty of that, at least to yours truly, is how I have incorporated
7 what became one of my life's greatest passions — namely that of
8 attending countless concerts performed by the world's great musi-
9 cians — into the very fabric of how I negotiate and share the knowl-
10 edge I have accumulated along the way.

11 As you will soon see in the pages that follow, I love a myri-
12 ad of musical genres. To illustrate the foregoing thoughts, a good
13 place to start would be with a soundcheck courtesy of one of my
14 all-time favorite bands. Although I don't truly consider myself to be
15 a Deadhead, by definition I most certainly am. Since 1975 when the
16 group was on a short hiatus, I have seen Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir and
17 Phil Lesh of the Grateful Dead perform either together or separately,
18 well over 150 times.

19
20 *"Do You Subconsciously Channel the Grateful Dead When*
21 *Negotiating Letters of Intent and Leases?"*

22 With the help of 63 songs sung by the Grateful Dead, given that
23 the expression "They Love Each Other" doesn't always permeate
24 many landlord-tenant relationships, what follows is a bit of "Help
25 on the Way" to help prevent real estate professionals having to shout
26 out "I Need a Miracle," or to endure the equivalent of a negotiating
27 "Cream Puff War," so that their negotiations will hopefully be fruit-
28 ful and more akin to that of a "Sunshine Daydream."

29 That said, when negotiating a letter of intent and thereafter the
30 lease, context plays a starring role whether you are a landlord, ten-
31 ant, or either of their advocates. By way of example, if you are

negotiating a relatively small lease in a hot owner's market, re- 1
gardless of whether or not the owner of the building is named "Mr. 2
Charlie," "Cosmic Charlie," "Bertha," "Sugar Magnolia," "Tko Iko," 3
"Casey Jones," "Jack Straw," "Corrina," "Cassidy," "Sugaree," 4
"Tennessee Jed," "Althea," "Samson and Delilah," or "Me and My 5
Uncle," or is a "Brown Eyed Woman" wearing "Scarlet Begonias," 6
or even if a guitar player in "Uncle John's Band" or "St. Stephen" 7
himself, you need to know that when a tenant's broker delivers a 8
twelve-page term sheet or takes a not-so-finely sharpened surgical 9
machete to a lease, in all likelihood it will create nothing short of 10
a metaphorical "Fire on the Mountain," in the form of the torch a 11
landlord will take to the aforementioned tenant letter of intent or 12
beyond-aggressive lease markup. 13

On the flip side, whether you are an owner or representing one, 14
your mantra cannot be that of "Shakedown Street" when it comes 15
to the manner in which you go about negotiating lease provisions, 16
as the goal is to be that of a dealmaker and not a deal-breaker if you 17
want your prospective tenant to turn on their leasing "Love Light" 18
for ten years or longer for the "Space" you are trying to rent in a 19
building. Furthermore, please keep in mind that most commercial 20
leases are heavily tilted in a landlord's favor, as most leasing at- 21
torneys have a "When I Paint My Masterpiece" mindset when it 22
comes to drafting them. Consequently, more often than not it makes 23
more sense for landlords to "Take a Step Back" on lesser provisions 24
as opposed to keep going "Around and Around" on "The Wheel" 25
that is the unfortunate consequence of protracted lease negotia- 26
tions, because whether you are experiencing yet another "One More 27
Saturday Night" "In The Midnight Hour," or alternatively, lying 28
awake in bed like a "Little Red Rooster" before "Sunrise" comes 29
along, even a well negotiated lease by a tenant's counsel, from a 30
legal and business perspective, will still leave a landlord "Sittin' on 31
Top of the World." 32

1 Moreover, an owner will rarely recover the rent lost for a space
2 that remains vacant; so, when wearing that hat, especially if the
3 landlord has little or no mortgage or is a long-term holder and not a
4 flipper, I'm a big advocate of receiving a good percentage of some-
5 thing in the form of rent rather than one hundred percent of the noth-
6 ing that comes with an unoccupied space. Unless your passion is to
7 have a rent-paying tenant make like Jerry Garcia by singing to you
8 "Next Time You See Me" or "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" as
9 they go "Truckin'" with its tenancy and perform their own version
10 of a "Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Todeloo" to another owner's
11 building, having vacant space is akin to going to a drive-in movie
12 theater without your soulmate but instead with a taxi driver whose
13 meter is running throughout the movie, who maybe like you has
14 not been vaccinated and is maskless, with the only liquid beverage
15 available at the snack bar being that of hand sanitizer ... it makes no
16 sense. No matter how you cut it, there is always a "Touch of Grey"
17 in any negotiation, and if you want to not only get by but survive as
18 well, my unsolicited advice to those in, or aspiring to be or remain
19 in, the leasing business, is to make sure you bring a bit of leasing
20 "Good Lovin'" to the bargaining table.

21 At worst, at least from where I sit, a tenant who helps pay your
22 mortgage, real estate taxes, operating expenses and the salaries of
23 your employees, is what I would consider to be a "Friend of the
24 Devil." As for tenants, when you are pleasantly confronted with a
25 landlord who is doing their best impression of the "Candyman" when
26 they are willing to give, on a ten-year lease, six months or more of
27 free rent and a \$75- to \$100-per-square-foot tenant improvement al-
28 lowance while also paying brokerage commissions and performing
29 base building work to your space, that's the type of devil a friend
30 should have. Stated a little bit differently, real estate professionals
31 who embrace some or all of the foregoing "Not Fade Away" nego-
32 tiating mantras, will rarely be left "Going Down the Road (Feeling

Bad)” because of a “Foolish Heart” or mind, as they know that there 1
“Comes a Time” to getting the “Deal,” with kudos out to Stevie 2
Wonder, “Signed, Sealed and Delivered.” 3

On a related note, it is imperative that a tenant hire a broker and 4
an attorney who not only are true leasing specialists, but ones who 5
can confidently say, when it comes to the meat of a lease often at- 6
tached to a pre-printed lease form, that “I Know You Rider.” 7

The time has come for me to stop going on and on like a “Ramble 8
On Rose,” but before I “Bid You Goodnight,” my hope is that my 9
aforementioned thoughts will ultimately result in, for the better, 10
more than just a small “Ripple” in your negotiating style. My fur- 11
ther hope is that it has woken you up to the realization that without 12
the assistance of real estate professionals, landlords and tenants will 13
never possess, from a leasing perspective, the “Eyes of the World” 14
that should be brought to each and every negotiation. So with that 15
relatively long yet “Easy Wind” of a monologue behind us, may all 16
of your transactions be an “Unbroken Chain” of successful ones, 17
may you continue to “Wave That Flag” of advocacy on behalf of 18
whoever you represent, may you rarely if ever experience an incur- 19
able case of the “U.S. Blues” due to a lack of leasing knowledge 20
leaving you feeling as if you were a “Dire Wolf” left out in the “Cold 21
Rain and Snow,” and may your always be the “Operator” control- 22
ling the destiny of your business, brand and balance sheet as it takes 23
on a “Let It Grow” mind of its own. 24

“Might As Well,” my brethren. 25

26



CHAPTER 1

The First Set: 1959 through October 25, 2001

"Setting up the Stage for Life's Concert"

The '50s and Early '60s: Elvis, Mom, Dad and U2 Can Find
What You're Looking For

Although the Elvis Presley song wasn't released until a few years later in 1957, "All Shook Up" seemed to be what happened to my parents on their very first date, if you would call it that, in March of 1953. Interestingly enough, their love connection was somewhat of a doubleheader, as in two couples sharing their first date together, with neither Marilyn nor Sheldon being paired up with the other.

Although Bono wasn't born until a year after me in 1960, apparently my father's mindset was that of U2's 1987 classic "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" with his date of the evening. When it came to my then twenty-four years old future papa, young and maybe not-so-innocent twenty two year old Marilyn was subconsciously singing to herself the 1930s song "I Only Have Eyes for You," as she somehow made plans that night with my 5'9" and then 125-pound hunk of a dad to meet on the down low the very next day.

Cutting to the chase, given their ages, the times and their passion for the other, three weeks later these young lovers eloped. My older sister Shari, who quite sadly took her own life in 2017, was born nine and a half months later, and I at Brooklyn Jewish Hospital on Classon Avenue, where housing projects now stand, five and a half years after that. Until we lost Pops in the boarding area on the way

1 home from celebrating, with kudos out to Elvis once more, my par-
2 ents' fiftieth anniversary in "Viva Las Vegas," their life together was
3 generally golden, with a healthy dose of tarnish and hard knocks
4 thrown in along the way.

5 Although I was only there to witness their last forty-four years
6 of marriage, being their son was something I will always cher-
7 ish. Through a myriad of perspectives, it was the experience of a
8 lifetime. It was as if my parents lived their lives to allow me the
9 privilege of finding happiness and success. Whether they knew it
10 or not, on a daily basis, Mom and Dad taught me how and on occa-
11 sion how not to conduct myself properly, with props to the Beatles
12 classic, along life's "Long and Winding Road." Along with my
13 "Fourboyzrusmom" loving wife Joy and our "4Boyz," Sean, Ryan,
14 Kyle and Conor, my in-laws Irma and Richard, and of course my
15 three childhood "brotherly" friends Lloyd, Stu and Mark from the
16 '60s, Shelly and Marilyn were truly the best and certainly the most
17 impactful teachers I ever had.

18 If you define success as solely that of possessing monetary
19 wealth, right or wrong, I am light-years away from what you very
20 well perceive success to be. Fortunately, I define success a hell of
21 a lot differently, and for that I am among the richest people I know.
22 Look no further than Joy and the Fourboyz, my "brothers" and ex-
23 tended family and friends.

24 With my Brooklyn accent remarkably embedded in me although
25 I only lived there the first six months of my life, we moved to
26 Rockaway in early 1960, and then to Loooooooong Island during
27 "The Summer of Love" in 1967. More about that later on.

28 Although maybe a bit of an exaggeration, getting back to the
29 point, I grew up without the riches of many around me, as my par-
30 ents were laborers. Shelly hung draperies and blinds five days a week
31 in New York City and points beyond, and on too many evenings
32 and almost every weekend, Pops willingly schlepped, packed and

unpacked the family van across the Mid and North Atlantic coast 1
as Marilyn's wingman in her antique furniture business. Whether 2
it was desk-bookcase combinations, dining room servers, armoires, 3
sewing machines, bric-a-brac, tables, chairs or picture frames, in 4
semi-remote locations such as Brimfield, America's oldest outdoor 5
flea market in Massachusetts, or Renninger's and Shupp's Grove in 6
the Amish Country, to them, being out in those fields before day- 7
break with a flashlight in hand was truly their Kevin Costner-like 8
"Field of Dreams." Playing off the title of The Who classic, it was 9
out on those very fields adjacent to a seemingly never ending "I Can 10
See For Miles" harvest of corn and other harvests from farmers who 11
sadly don't receive their just due, that I witnessed with the awe of 12
a child how hard my parents fought to put meals on the table and 13
clothes on my back. 14

The "however" is that when it came to their Austin Powers-like 15
Mini Me, who was merely along for the ride starting at the age of 16
four if not sooner, although I was always (and still am to this very 17
day) up for the party, it was painful for me to be riding shotgun from 18
the back seat of that Ford Econoline van instead of being back home 19
hanging with my pals, or transfixed by some game on our black 20
and white TV. But as crazy as it may sound to you, those fields 21
were where my independent and "fly my freak flag" nature, along 22
with a litany of life lessons, began. They were my initial "Enabling 23
Moments." 24

Among the many lessons gained from being a reluctant passen- 25
ger and part-time antique dealer in my nursery and early elementary 26
school days was mastering the art of listening. Moreover, it's where 27
my imagination began to conjure up a myriad of visual images of 28
the future along the way. Many afternoons were spent listening to a 29
ballgame in the van alone on a pocket transistor radio, as my parents 30
did their best to foreshadow Missy Elliott's "Get Your Freak On," as 31
they made their way onto the dance floor which those fields were. In 32

1 this case though, their soon-to-be-found dance partners were hope-
2 fully going to be a large batch of weathered antiques in need of a
3 love we all encounter by way of good intentions from those close to
4 us: refurbishment and fine tuning.

5 Much like when an opportunistically optimistic real estate devel-
6 oper with an eye for talent doesn't see a rundown building as a dump
7 beyond rehabilitation, but rather as one possessing "great bones" in
8 an up-and-coming neighborhood which ultimately will yield great
9 dividends if underwritten and refurbished properly, it was out in
10 those fields where Marilyn and Shelly envisioned and then achieved
11 something very similar: a Stevie Wonder-like "Innervisions" eye to
12 reinvent and repurpose antiques that others felt no amount of tender
13 loving care would ever bring back to life. How wrong those oth-
14 ers were. Farm analogies intended, it was my parents' sojourns and
15 plowing of the fields littered with antique bargains which ultimately
16 put a myriad of dairy products, bacon, chicken and steak on our
17 family's kitchen table. Prior COVID-19 distancing mandates aside,
18 it also may be the reason why I enjoy being out in fields or stadiums
19 listening to music, or having my heart broken by my beloved J-E-
20 T-S or Mets, with 50,000 or so of my closest friends.

21 The Bottom Line #1: Contrary to the title of a song by Diana Ross
22 and the Supremes, when it came to my parents, you CAN hurry love.

23 The Bottom Line #2: Life is truly a lesson. Embrace and seize it,
24 be present, and always grow from the "Enabling Moments" that are
25 gifted to you, whether or not those "gifts" are welcomed presents at
26 the time they are bestowed upon you.

27

28

Time for a Soundcheck?

1

With homage out to The Torch Foundation, a great group of New York City real estate professionals making a difference for special needs children and those at-risk by way of their mission of “Building a Foundation for a Better Tomorrow,” much of business is about, as Lionel Richie and his old band The Commodores might sing, acquiring a “Brick House” of knowledge. Why, you ask? Cutting to the chase while simultaneously playing off the title of a Red Hot Chili Peppers song, knowledge is “The Power of Equality,” which will not only enable you career wise, with kudos out to Pearl Jam, to become a “Better Man” and “The Fixer” of problems, but also give you, as Brooklyn’s own Beastie Boys once rapped about, possessing “Skills to Pay the Bills.”

The Bottom Line: In any event, although not necessarily subconsciously, I often channel the aforementioned song titles from Lionel Richie, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and the Beastie Boys when acquiring knowledge, with the goal being that of “Building a Foundation for a Better Tomorrow” for both myself as well as my clients and family.

Time for Another Soundcheck?

20

Get Your Head Out of Your Ass, Your Butt Out of the Bleachers
and Your Heart, Mind and Body Firmly Planted on the
Playing Field

With thanks out to eleven-time Grammy Award winner Jack Antonoff, twenty-eight of his songs and the name of his current band as well, if on occasion you “Dream of Mickey Mantle” when

1 it comes to what your professional achievements will hopefully be,
2 I implore you to not only leap onto life's playing field as you haul
3 your butt out of the *Bleachers*, but also to simultaneously master the
4 "Tiny Moves" of business while making the mantra "I Wanna Get
5 Better" part of your inner fabric. Be forewarned that if you don't,
6 and/or if you possess a "Me Before You" attitude when it comes to
7 not looking out for your client's best interests when a deal you're
8 working on is met head on with a "Rollercoaster" of hiccups and
9 speedbumps, your ears will be filled with a series of unwanted gems
10 thrown your way, including such rough cuts as:

- 11 1. When things go sideways, why do you disappear to the point
12 that your colleagues are compelled to scream out at you
13 "Don't Go Dark" on me?
- 14 2. "You're Still a Mystery" to me as to how talented you are but
15 how ineffective you can be.
- 16 3. When it comes to paying your invoice, don't worry about
17 singing to yourself "Don't Take the Money," because there's
18 not a shot in hell you're going to be paid because among
19 other things, you have become the master of perpetuating, as
20 opposed to solving, the problems before you.
- 21 4. "Nothing is U."
- 22 5. I "Hate That You Know Me."
- 23 6. You are not among "All My Heroes."
- 24 7. "How Dare You Want More" of my business?
- 25 8. When it comes to your digital skills, you're anything but a
26 "Modern Girl" or guy.
- 27 9. Have some "Self Respect."
- 28 10. When it comes to under-promising and over-delivering, have
29 you once ever uttered "I Am Right on Time?"
- 30 11. Hanging with you is not what one might say is a slice of
31 "Ordinary Heaven."

12. After your performance on our recent transaction, with love 1
certainly not intended, from a business perspective please 2
don't ever expect me to say to you "Let's Get Married." 3
13. I can easily think of at least "91" professionals I'd rather 4
have on my side of the bargaining table. 5
14. "Everybody Lost Somebody" and today, with that great 6
Bleachers song "I'm Ready to Move On" blaring in the fore- 7
front of my mind, the somebody I'm losing is you. 8
15. "Stop Making This Hurt." 9
16. This is the last meal we're having in "Chinatown," or any 10
other place for that matter. 11
17. If I haven't made myself clear enough, lose my number so 12
you don't "Call Me After Midnight" or 6 AM for that matter. 13
18. Don't ever try to "Wake Me" up with the beeping of your 14
unwanted text or the screech of your voice bellowing out 15
"Goodmorning." 16
19. Despite you having both a good yet "Wild Heart," it's time 17
for me to take a "Juno Interlude" from you, for a not so little 18
thing called forever. 19
20. With due props out to the name of the Bleachers' 2017 al- 20
bum, I am begging you to "Be Gone" now. 21

The Wonder Years and (Got to) Revolution: The '60s

Just seven months or so after I was born in Brooklyn back 24
in 1959, my parents made like the Dodgers a few years earli- 25
er, when we became the first members of our family to ever say 26
FUHGETABOUTIT to Brooklyn, by embracing the not-yet-written 27
written song by the Ramones, when we moved out east to "Rockaway 28

1 Beach” in Queens. You can take the boy and girl out of Brooklyn,
2 but certain rituals, along with a Brooklyn accent (although I had
3 never uttered a word there), you couldn’t leave behind.

4 Although in the early ’60s my family was “blue collar” with
5 aspirations to become members of the lower or middle class, one
6 birthright ingrained in my parents’ inner being was that of our an-
7 nual summer pilgrimages up to “The Jewish Alps,” better known as
8 the Catskill Mountains.

9 With kudos out to another Ramones song, we played the part
10 of “We’re a Happy Family” to perfection, as Mom, Dad, my sister
11 Shari and I crammed ten pounds of fat into a five-pound box of a
12 closet masquerading as a hotel room. First, it was for long week-
13 ends at a family bungalow colony in Sullivan County, and then a
14 few summers later for monthly excursions at a number of seemingly
15 countless “B” and “C” hotels in South Fallsburg, Swan Lake, Loch
16 Sheldrake and Monticello. Schlocky as those hotels were, they will
17 always be Disneyland to me. I am forever thankful for the impact
18 they made on my life.

19 At the not-so-mature ages of eight to ten years old, whether it
20 was hanging in the faux-wood-paneled game rooms littered with
21 weathered pool tables and ping pong tables and pinball machines
22 that had seen better days, learning how to swim at the indoor pool
23 where the not-so-sweet stench of mildew permeated the air, taking
24 a rowboat out by myself, or simply watching *I Love Lucy* reruns
25 at 7 PM on an old black and white TV with rabbit ear antennas in
26 the TV room with people I didn’t know after I had just gorged on a
27 seemingly bottomless smorgasbord of food I adored, with homage
28 out to Kurt Cobain and Dave Grohl, my late ’60s experiences in the
29 Catskills was nothing short of blissful Nirvana.

30 I would be remiss if I didn’t mention how every Saturday night I
31 broke curfew after pleading with my parents to let me join them for
32 the 11:30 PM comedy, burlesque and strip tease shows, by sneaking

into the hotel's nightclub. For those of you who enjoyed watching the 1
Netflix hit *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* and the shows she performed 2
in the Catskills, it was that and so much more. With due homage out 3
to the dearly departed Patrick Swayze and Eddie Money, hanging in 4
the Catskills during those *Dirty Dancing* days were truly my "Ticket 5
to Paradise." 6

One or two more things: did I mention the girls, and the indepen- 7
dence I had? Although I was shy and candidly, really never possessed 8
a "good rap" until much later in life if that, even as a sports-obsessed 9
boy, I always liked girls. Part of my routine at the Flagler Hotel in 10
'69 was to eavesdrop on conversations taking place in the big din- 11
ing room at breakfast, as I lived to hear about what the dining staff 12
and camp counselors did in town and on the hotel grounds the night 13
before. Another was to go to the outdoor pool after lunch, mainly 14
solo with no wing man in tow, to observe college-aged waiters and 15
busboys hanging and flirting with the girls who worked at the hotel, 16
as well as the older high school and college girls who were still be- 17
ing dragged to the Catskills by their parents. It was mind-boggling 18
to me what a great gig all of the staff had. 19

So, one day as I was chowing down on a bagel with lox and a 20
schmear of cream cheese, I went up to Sheldon the busboy, whose 21
uncle happened to be the legendary wrestler Bruno Sammartino, to 22
ask him if he was having as much fun as he appeared to be. The big- 23
gest s*it-eating grin appeared across his face as he said to me, "Kid, 24
if there is anything you do in this life, make it your business to get 25
a job like mine when you're old enough, in a hotel like this." As 26
he walked away laughing hysterically, Sheldon turned around and 27
wagged his finger at me as he said, "Trust me." 28

I had just turned ten a few days before July 4th in 1969, and with 29
his words forever ingrained in my prepubescent mind, the begin- 30
ning of what would become many of my very own "Independence" 31
Day celebrations had arrived. It was only a short six years later in 32

1 the Summer of '75, when I landed my dream job as a busboy at the
2 Hotel Evans in Loch Sheldrake. I soon learned, much to my delight,
3 why Sheldon was laughing so hard after he imparted those sage
4 words of wisdom to me that morning. But more about that later. For
5 now, it was that summer that I coined (okay, not really) the expres-
6 sion "Living the Dream."

7 The Bottom Line #1: With all that I observed as a wide-eyed boy
8 up in the Jewish Alps during the "Summer of Love" through 1969
9 (including when that summer I watched in awe as man landed on
10 the moon in addition to observing a not-so-small cultural phenom-
11 enon called Woodstock occur just down the road), I began to believe
12 that not only was anything possible if you put your mind to it, but
13 that if you worked your butt off, the chances of some semblance of
14 your hopes, prayers and dreams becoming your reality had a fight-
15 ing chance to occur.

16 The Bottom Line #2: Remember, my parents were truly laborers,
17 and on countless cold winter and ninety-degree days, I watched with
18 both awe and self-imposed guilt as they "stripped" antique furniture
19 in the backyard, giving new life to something that barely had a pulse
20 before they worked their magic on it. By witnessing my mama and
21 papa turn s*it into gold, or more politely stated, lemons into lemon-
22 ade, the seeds were planted for my ultimately becoming an optimist.
23 I also experienced firsthand how my parents played their part in
24 coining the expression "giving the shirt off your back" to those you
25 care about. It's what my parents did for me, and I in turn attempt to
26 do for, and for those I consider, my family.

27 The Bottom Line #3: In 1969, not so ironically, Crosby, Stills, Nash
28 & Young released the song "Teach Your Children," and a few years
29 later, Carlos Santana recorded "Let the Children Play." Although at

times my parents struggled with finding the balance between the two, 1
as they admittedly gave me *way* more independence than a young 2
boy should have had then or now, playing off the title of the epic 3
Nina Simone song, it was the time of “Feeling Good.” Fortunately 4
for me, the overdose of independence my parents bestowed upon me 5
was the dawn, day and life that worked for me. 6

**What Do *Stripes*, Bill Murray, PS42 in 7
Rockaway, Don’t Call Me “Lawrence 8
Howard” and My First Negotiation 9
Have in Common? 10**

Although not along the same lines as when the character Psycho 11
in *Stripes* told Bill Murray he would kill him if he called him 12
Francis, as a little boy I cringed when, on the not-so-rare occasions I 13
misbehaved, my mother called me “Lawrence Howard.” So much so, 14
that I actually convinced my first-grade school teacher to change my 15
school records to “Larry” Haber. You see, back in the summer of ’59, 16
you didn’t get your Social Security number right after you were born 17
in the hospital; you got your nine digits when you started working. 18
Consequently, when Uncle Sam asks me who I am, although I can’t 19
say that I play in a rock and roll band, I can proudly say “Larry Haber.” 20

The Bottom Line #1: As was the case with my first negotiation with 21
someone other than my parents, if you want something bad enough, 22
even if you are only a kid, just like the song by the Long Island band 23
The Jammin J’s goes, “Go and Get It.” 24

The Bottom Line #2: I was a relentless kid in 1965, and as many 25
would attest to now, I’m still the same relentless kid today. Some 26
things never change! 27

Time for a Soundcheck? Is Your "Life's Jukebox" Limited to One Song?

1
2
3
4 **G**rowing up, I spent too much time eating those old Swanson's
5 Hungry-Man frozen dinners and stripping antique furniture so
6 I didn't have to watch my parents perform the task any more often
7 than they already did. Between their struggles to get local kids to
8 take their place at \$50/hour despite the minimum wage then being
9 \$1.60/ hour, and seeing my father work like a dog hanging drapes
10 while being my mom's business wingman, it was as if his favorite
11 song was "Eight Days A Week" by the Beatles.

12 The Bottom Line: Not that there's anything wrong with it, but unless
13 you want your life's mantra to be the New Riders of the Purple Sage
14 song "Dirty Business" with a guest appearance by Jerry Garcia on
15 pedal steel guitar, or your meal of choice to be a frozen TV dinner
16 whose main protein looks like a science experiment gone awry, my
17 suggestion to you is to get hungry, stay busy and work your ass off
18 at whatever it is that will make you money while being happy as
19 well. Short of that, your life's jukebox may very well have just one
20 song on the playlist, namely Johnny Paycheck's classic "Take This
21 Job and Shove It."

The Heat Is On

22
23 **I**n fourth and fifth grade, despite my pals Lloyd, Stu and Mark
24 busting my chops all the time as I played tetherball at lunch time
25 now and then with a few girls I liked, I knew exactly what I was do-
26 ing. Flirting and getting a bit of attention was my agenda. I had heard

on many occasions back then that I looked just like TV's elemen- 1
tary school heartthrob Brandon Cruz, the star of *The Courtship of* 2
Eddie's Father, and although the Joe Jackson song wasn't released 3
until a decade or so later, they thought I was "Kinda Kute." I was 4
just putting to good use whatever my skill set allowed me. 5

The Bottom Line: Follow your passion and your heart, even if it 6
means, with kudos out to the great Glenn Frey song from the movie 7
Beverly Hills Cop starring Eddie Murphy, that "The Heat Is On" and 8
may remain so courtesy of those you call your friends, peers and 9
colleagues. 10

Time for a Soundcheck? 11 **"Who Are You?"** 12

With not only a little help from 42 songs by rock and roll leg- 13
ends The Who, I have taken liberties with the number "42" in 14
honor of the great Jackie Robinson, as well as the year 1942, which 15
was when both Jimi Hendrix and Jerry Garcia were born. Truth be 16
told, I am also paying homage to the name of one of my favorite te- 17
quilas, namely 1942. With that behind us to ponder, let's talk about 18
the question we all need to answer at some point in our lives and 19
careers, and that is quite simply: "WHO ARE YOU?" 20

"I Can't Explain" why every day can't be "Christmas," or why 21
we can't always spend our days "Going Mobile" on a "Magic Bus" 22
that will take you on whatever "Amazing Journey" floats your boat, 23
or why life won't allow you to have an "I Can See for Miles" vision 24
"Behind Blue Eyes," a "Girl's Eyes" or whatever color your eyes 25
may be, to avoid what may seem like yet "Another Tricky Day" or 26
one thousand to navigate, or why you're left feeling sometimes as 27
if you are a "Helpless Dancer" or being "Drowned" in "The Dirty 28

1 Jobs” of life, or why you have maybe pondered on more than one
2 occasion whether “Is It in My Head?” when you “Go to the Mirror”
3 and ask yourself whether someday you will “Be Lucky” like many
4 of your peers, or more than you have been previously in your ca-
5 reer decisions. But with that all said, regardless of whatever “My
6 Generation” you inhabit, or even if you spent your youth living in
7 a semi-regrettable “Teenage Wasteland,” there is always time, even
8 if one’s career “Music Must Change” when it may seem that “The
9 Song is Over,” to play whatever “New Song” you desire, much like
10 I had to endure when I was compelled to reinvent myself after the
11 impact of the Great Recession took me from being general counsel
12 and an owner with my partners of a large real estate portfolio, to
13 making crazy videos that in 2009 (and today for that matter) left
14 many thinking I had gone off the deep end.

15 What was the secret to helping “See My Way” in finding a suit-
16 able “Substitute” for how I could hopefully write another “Success
17 Story” for myself, as I dug out from the “Fragments of Fragments”
18 of my prior life, while also having fun the next twenty-five or so
19 years of my career in doing so, you may wonder? Well, a large part
20 came from the “Face the Face” I had with myself as I looked deep
21 inside of “The Real Me.” Another was of course “My Wife,” always
22 knowing that Joy’s “Love, Reign O’er Me” with her “You Stand By
23 Me,” I got your back, don’t worry, “The Kids Are Alright” mindset
24 being my inspirational salvation.

25 It also helped that the hard knocks I endured became the con-
26 duit to enable me to then learn a myriad of lessons from mistakes I
27 made along the way, which in turn made it that much easier for me
28 to embrace a “Won’t Get Fooled Again,” “We’re Not Gonna Take
29 It,” “Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere” work ethic (as opposed to my
30 leaving the office at or prior to “5:15”). The foregoing mindsets,
31 as well as that of possessing a “Join Together” drive to be “The
32 Seeker” in creating new friends and business relationships, would

be the mantras that would rule the days to follow. 1
All of the foregoing mantras may not work for everyone, or they 2
may not be perceived as the optimistic “Bargain” outlook I feel they 3
truly are. But if nothing else, not only will a good part of them be a 4
cure for your bad case of “Summertime Blues” as you try to put the 5
impact of life’s valleys in your rear view mirrors, but “You Better 6
You Bet” they just may be the right “Overture” to help you answer 7
the question “Do You Think It’s Alright?” with an emphatic HELL 8
YEAH, when asked about the trajectory of your life and career path. 9
That all said, my friends, with the title of the Grateful Dead song 10
“When Push Comes to Shove” playing in the background, can you 11
please tell me, or yourself for that matter, “WHO ARE YOU?” 12

Infinite Possibilities

To be a kid in 1969 and 1970 growing up in New York was tru- 14
ly magical. It was when I witnessed, through sports and other 15
world events, that anything is possible. To use the original name of a 16
wonderful charity my friend Drew created years later to make a dif- 17
ference for so many underprivileged children, “Infinite Possibilities” 18
was soon to become a mantra ingrained in my inner fabric. 19

From Joe Willie Namath coming through with his historical 20
guarantee that the Jets would defeat the heavily favored Colts in 21
Super Bowl III, to mankind landing on the moon that July, to the 22
Amazin’ Mets, led by manager Gil Hodges and Tom Seaver, win- 23
ning the World Series just a year removed from a lifetime record 24
of 394 wins and 737 losses, and then, watching the legendary Red 25
Holzman coach Willis Reed, Walt Frazier and other countless greats 26
to the 1969/1970 season NBA championship, as an impressionable 27
ten year old, I came to believe that dreams can come true. 28

1 The Bottom Line: Although dreaming won't necessarily make one's
2 dreams and aspirations come true, having a dream is a damn good
3 launching pad to making the 1965 song from the play *Man of La*
4 *Mancha*, namely that of "The Impossible Dream," become your
5 reality.

6 **Never Let a Good Crisis Go to Waste**

7 **A**ttending elementary school in the '60s required as part of our
8 social studies curriculum the study of World War II. As an in-
9 quisitive kid always in search of answers to the title of the song "Tell
10 Me Why" by Neil Young, given my exposure to old film clips cover-
11 ing the atrocities that transpired during WWII, not to mention hav-
12 ing to experience recurring air raid drills while hovering under my
13 school desk back in the day, I was dumbfounded when I first heard
14 the rather mind-bendingly optimistic quote "Never let a good crisis
15 go to waste" by Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill.
16 To a kid then in his single digits, it very well may have brought on
17 my first utterance of the acronym "WTF."

18 To a young'n' with obviously way too much time on my hands
19 and mind, I soon found out that not only did Winston never, ever
20 meet a good cigar or scotch he didn't like, I also came to learn how he
21 seized on the tumult which was the consequential fallout of WWII.
22 As the world crumbled around him, the prime minister performed
23 his own version of *carpe diem* by helping to create an unlikely super
24 group that no one could ever have anticipated, becoming as formi-
25 dable and world-changing as any before and quite possibly since.

26 Although I am not quite certain who played lead guitar, sang lead
27 vocals or took on triple-duty as the bass player, keyboardist and/
28 or drummer to maintain the beat the world so sorely needed back
29 in the 1940s, without this unlikely joining of Winston, the Soviet

Union's Joseph Stalin and the USA's four-term president Franklin
Delano Roosevelt (FDR), whatever remaining semblance of peace-
ful co-existence which exists today very well would never have hap-
pened without the combination of allies (Churchill and FDR) and
"frenemies" (when you add Stalin to the mix) playing their part.
WWII ending and the creation of the United Nations are just a few
highlights of their many accomplishments. Without them, I'm not
quite so sure that our country back then would have been able, in the
words of John Lennon, to ever "Imagine" that the battlefield was set
up to "Give Peace a Chance."

The Bottom Line #1: Can you say collaboration? If you can't, may-
be it's time to do so, my friend.

The Bottom Line #2: You don't have to be best buddies with every-
one you work with. When the greater good calls, more often than
not, putting aside whatever differences you may have with a friend,
business associate, competitor, enemy or someone you truly do not
enjoy hanging with, is often the right choice.

The Bottom Line #3: There are many things in life and business
that are inevitable. On the downer side, taxes, the greatest buzz-
kill of life (aka "death"), heartbreak, sadness, mistakes and failures
are among everyone's not-so-greatest hits on life's mixtape. Just the
same, in a strange way, optimism is what allows me to accept that
these "crises" are going to occur, often when I least expect them to.
Accepting that fact allows me in turn to be a tad more accepting of,
as well as prepared for, crises when they rear their ugly heads.

One can approach problems or crises in a myriad of ways.
Regrettably, many give up too soon by simultaneously succumbing
to them as they become a very lonely guest of one in their own self-
pity party. I prefer though, whenever possible, to figure out a way to

The Dirty Dancing Days

1
2 A few short days before my sixteenth birthday in June of 1975, I
3 was able to charm my way into a job at the Evans Hotel in the
4 Catskill Mountains. Although the pay for being a busboy was only
5 \$25 a week, it also included housing, three meals a day, the ability
6 to make over \$200 a week in tips and, just as importantly, the oppor-
7 tunity to have as my new life mentors and guardian angels through
8 Labor Day, a cast of characters then attending or recently having
9 graduated from college.

10 Pay special attention to the words “housing” or lack thereof, and
11 “guardian angels.” Not that I became a mascot of some sort to my
12 newfound pals, but in a sense, some of them seemed to take great
13 pride in making sure that no less than five things would take place
14 that summer for yours truly:

- 15 1. Have fun;
- 16 2. Learn valuable life lessons;
- 17 3. Master my new craft;
- 18 4. Be an activate participant as I rode shotgun on the adven-
19 tures to follow; and
- 20 5. Make sure that no one took advantage of “The Kid” and my
21 then semi-naive nature.

22 Given my love for the songs “Sympathy for the Devil” and
23 “Friend of the Devil” by The Rolling Stones and the Grateful Dead,
24 respectively, I hesitate describing the housing provided to the dining
25 room staff as an absolute hellhole, as to do so would not only be an
26 insult to Satan, Lucifer or whatever other names he may go by; but
27 also because — with kudos out to the Drive-By Truckers — it was
28 most definitely a place “Where the Devil Don’t Stay.” Think about

mold, falling rafters, unhinged doors, showers that barely spit out 1
rusty water and bathrooms that somehow smelled worse than one of 2
those portable bathrooms after a football game. 3

So with that as the backdrop, one of my newly acquired body- 4
guards took it upon himself to subconsciously channel the recently 5
released Bob Marley classic “Get Up, Stand Up” along with the 6
not-yet-penned “Know Your Rights” song by the Clash, when he 7
dropped a dime (translation: *making a call in the '70s from a phone* 8
booth) to the Sullivan County Board of Health, pleading with them 9
to do an immediate inspection of our living quarters. Less than 24 10
hours later, our housing structure was rightfully condemned and as 11
a consequence the hotel was forced to give all of us a standard hotel 12
room accompanied by maid service and a roommate for the remain- 13
ing two summer months. To describe it with a song from the late 14
'90s, it was Ricky Martin, “Livin’ la Vida Loca” (as in “the crazy 15
life”) time. 16

Even crazier, for reasons I don’t recall, not even a week later 17
my roommate abruptly quit his job, and the hotel never replaced 18
him with another roomie. At that age, if you were fortunate enough 19
to have gone to sleep-away camp, this was the summer you always 20
dreamed of: to either be a C.I.T. (i.e., counselor in training) or a 21
waiter at the camp you went to as a kid. For my friends who were 22
lucky enough to have experienced that, all of them were better for it. 23
Although it wasn’t a competition, as it didn’t suck for either of us, 24
imagine me: no parental supervision, making nearly \$250 a week 25
with tips, eating like a king, not having to clean my room, and po- 26
litely stated, enjoying a social life with boundaries that were largely 27
non-existent. I knew then how lucky I was, and even in the moment, 28
I was so grateful for the “dime dropped” that played a part in shap- 29
ing the summer of a lifetime. 30

A week or so later, a rather old (to me) waiter (he was in his early 31
30s) approached me with an offer which was one I was informed I 32

1 had no choice but to accept. In exchange for what he described as
2 “his protection of me,” every Sunday when I received my weekly
3 tips, I would be required to give him twenty percent of my tips.
4 In my mind, and that of the singer Graham Parker for that matter,
5 “Protection” was what I needed to keep this wannabe matzoh ball-
6 slinging gangster away from me. So, when this thug of a waiter
7 was no longer in view but still lurking in the shadows of a dining
8 room that sat roughly three hundred people, I approached my friend
9 Brooklyn Larry (“BK”), a seasoned veteran waiter in the dining
10 room although not yet twenty-one years of age.

11 BK took an immediate liking to me, maybe in part because I still
12 had my Brooklyn accent. Thankfully, apparently part of BK’s mis-
13 sion that summer was to be somewhat of a surrogate older brother to
14 me. In the first few weeks of July, as part of my daily social rounds,
15 I made it a point to visit BK and his girlfriend (and now wife) for
16 advice, as well as to let them know how things were going for me.
17 As you may have already surmised, also to find out where the party
18 would be that night.

19 So, when I told BK about the Grateful Dead “Shakedown Street”
20 incident I had experienced a few moments earlier, like a lion look-
21 ing out for one of his cubs, BK instinctively put his arm around my
22 shoulder as we walked over to the perpetrator, who was then cower-
23 ing in front of one of the large columns in the dining room. BK was
24 rightfully pissed off, and in one fell swoop, he lifted up, with no of-
25 fense to anyone named Richard, this D*CK of a waiter by his lapels
26 and politely shouted at him, “If you screw with Larry, you screw
27 with me. You disgust me.” As we walked away, BK told me I had
28 nothing further to worry about, and he was right. “Richard” couldn’t
29 have been any nicer to me the rest of the summer.

30 The Bottom Line #1: When something doesn’t smell or feel right,
31 conditions and context permitting, you need to make like the Clash

and Bob Marley to not only learn how to “Know Your Rights” but
thereafter, to once again “Get Up, Stand Up” so as to enforce them
accordingly. Trust your instincts. Even without a vast amount of
business or life experiences, more often than not your gut is the
right compass.

The Bottom Line #2: Although I’ll expand on this later with a bit of
inspiration from the incomparable Whitney Houston, it is impera-
tive that you find, especially earlier on in your career, a number
of business and life mentors. As a teaser though, among the many
things a mentor can provide is a “Hold on, Help Is on the Way,”
“Count on Me,” “I Got You,” and “Never Give Up” safety net when
it comes to helping you navigate life’s journey.

Time for a Soundcheck? **Time Management Revisited**

When it comes to time management, one needs to know that
you can’t make your life’s mantra that of the song “Party
All the Time,” by the star who played the donkey in *Shrek*, namely
Eddie Murphy, because if you do, sadly you very well would be left
singing Blake Shelton’s song “Goodbye Time.”

Instead, it might be a good idea to make the song titles of Kelly
Clarkson and the Allman Brothers Band “Don’t Waste Your Time”
and “Ain’t Wastin’ Time No More” part of your inner fabric, because
in doing so, as Freddie Mercury and David Bowie used to sing, not
only will any thoughts of feeling “Under Pressure” be mitigated, but
you may come to realize, in the words of The Rolling Stones, that
“Time Is On My Side.”

Stated a bit differently, if you properly and efficiently allocate the
twenty-four hours in a day bestowed upon us, while simultaneously

1 embracing the thought that sleeping ten or more hours a day is vast-
2 ly overrated, you will have put yourself in a position to say, as the
3 title of the Oscar-winning song from the movie *Dirty Dancing* goes,
4 that “ (I’ve Had) The Time of My Life.”

5 **Survival of the Not So Always Fittest, and**
6 **If You Want It, Sometimes You Merely**
7 **Need to Ask.**

8 **D**uring the fall of 1975 and winter of 1976, a significant num-
9 ber of hotels in the Catskill Mountains, due primarily to either
10 bankruptcy or fire damage incurred by what back then was referred
11 to in a derogatory manner as Italian or Jewish lightning, shuttered
12 their doors on a past and future that had long passed them by. To
13 me, the then-consequential fallout in the early part of our nation’s
14 bicentennial summer from these closings, was my having to en-
15 dure a Groucho Marx-like “Hello, I Must Be Going” series of four
16 jobs in less than a three- week span, due to there being an absolute
17 dearth of hotel jobs available for kids trying to escape the big city or
18 their sleepy suburban towns, for a summer of what they perceived
19 as their Willy Wonka-like golden ticket to their very own land of
20 enchantment.

21 Mother Nature, no parental supervision, great tips awaiting you
22 if you had any semblance of an “A” game, along with free, bounti-
23 ful and relatively tasty food, not to mention future love connections
24 on the horizon, were (temporarily) eluding me, and quite possibly
25 many more hormonally charged teenage kids. So until I finally got
26 my dream job at the then-world-famous Kutsher’s Hotel, starting
27 on Friday, July 19, 1975, the Avon Lodge, the Aladdin, the Shady
28 Nook (for 15 minutes, if that) and the Tamarack Lodge were my
29 playground.

What follows are two relatively short stories, with both of their 1
outcomes ultimately weaving their way into my very being. I would 2
like to think that these experiences played a supporting if not star- 3
ring role in my achieving a modicum of success, and thankfully but 4
certainly less frequently, a little failure along the way. Life is about 5
many things, with one of its Top 10's being that of "Leave It Better 6
Than You Found It." That's what the following did for me. 7

About five days after my short stint at the Avon Lodge ended 8
soon after July 4, I had less than \$50 to play with, and my par- 9
ents were pleading with me to give up the dream they perceived I 10
was not living by coming home to beautiful Loooooong Island. To 11
me, there was no shot I was leaving New York State's version of 12
the Swiss Alps for the not-so-rough-and-tumble streets of Jericho 13
and Syosset. Not that there's anything wrong with it, but short of 14
cleaning toilets, I would have taken almost any hotel job to keep the 15
dream alive. 16

With that permeating mindset, I was fortunate to have been 17
placed by a Monticello-based employment agency for a "job com- 18
petition" with another kid around my age. Thinking back, the situ- 19
ation I found myself in was somewhat similar to the Food Network 20
show *Chopped*. Aside from the fact that there were no celebrity chef 21
judges, or \$10,000 prizes or television cameras to capture the day- 22
long competition, the ground rules were quite simple. With the skill 23
of a trained chef twice our age, prepare semi-elaborate fruit platters 24
for the two-hundred-some guests at the Aladdin Hotel to feast upon. 25
At the end of the day, the better fruit chopper and platter designer 26
would be hired, and the other sent packing, having gorged on three 27
oversized meals along with a \$50 check for his troubles. Either way, 28
I would be a winner, given that my Armageddon scenario would be 29
that of my then-skinny belly being filled to the brim, along with my 30
wallet containing a crisp bill plastered with Ulysses Grant's face 31
on it. The opportunity to metaphorically play a 1970s version of 32

1 *Chopped* also would provide me another three or four days to some-
2 how find a busboy job at a higher-end hotel where I could nest the
3 rest of the summer.

4 After sizing up my competition throughout breakfast, it became
5 very clear to me how the day would play out. My “competitor’s”
6 skills (or better put, his severe lack thereof) were similar to mine;
7 the only question in my mind was whether our asses would be fired
8 before or after the dinner shift. You didn’t have to be Julia Child or
9 Bobby Flay to figure out what was so plainly obvious and forthcom-
10 ing. So as breakfast was ending, I walked over to my equally clue-
11 less competitor and politely conveyed with a big smile something
12 along the lines of, “My newfound friend, two things in our respec-
13 tive lives are inevitable today. The first is that your ass and mine will
14 be fired at the end of the day if not sooner. The second, and possibly
15 more important thing, is that after the lunch shift, we need to find a
16 way to enjoy the ‘fruits’ of our hard work and all that the Aladdin
17 has to offer on our two-and- one-half hour break between lunch and
18 dinner.”

19 As you might surmise, you didn’t have to be Albert Einstein to
20 figure out that my earlier perception became our reality. We were
21 both canned immediately after the evening’s dinner shift.

22 The Bottom Line: If you have a desire or goal, whether it be that of
23 profound success or merely to put yourself in a better position to
24 consume life’s fruits, generally stated you need to do that which you
25 need to do to survive. Please don’t take that as if I am telling you to
26 walk a line that has, with kudos to Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter
27 intended, a “Touch of Grey” in it, but if you want to not only get by
28 and survive but strive for your chance to grab life’s equivalent of
29 Willy Wonka’s golden ticket as well, having a relentless and pas-
30 sionate pursuit of the goal mindset is imperative.

31

(Relentlessly) Seek and You Shall Find

It all began the night before I started at the then-world-renowned Kutsher's Hotel. Thursday dinner was soon ending at the Tamarack Lodge where iconic legends such as the Who, Janis Joplin, Cream and Jerry Lewis had once performed. If you recall, the pay for a job in the hotel dining room was that of room, board and \$25/week. The big bucks, which for a busboy could be \$200-plus a week in 1975 (i.e., just over \$1,000 a week adjusted to 2023 dollars), was that of the tips. So on a hot July Thursday evening, what was a boy to do when the custom was that those ever-elusive tips were only given after Sunday lunch when either guests left after a week's stay or husbands took the trip back to the city (while as rumor had it, some of the wives left behind played their version of "bungalow bunny" with some of the hotel's help among others)?

One would never accuse me of being shy, even when I was sixteen years old; but at that point and place in time, whatever rap I had was not even close to being fully developed. The big "however," though, was my need to get my hands on that which was due me for my slinging chopped liver, stuffed cabbage, and matzo ball soup to my assigned hotel guests since the prior Sunday night. It was time to bust out of my shell and "ask the big ask" with tact, sincerity, passion and a drop of embellished bullsh*t.

So to each of the four tables I was serving of eight or 10 altekakers (i.e., in Yiddish, politely stated an older and sometimes fussy and crotchety person), my well-thought-out spiel (i.e., Yiddish for "rap") was essentially, "I hope everyone is having a great week so far. But before I tell you my story and ask you for a very simple request, I must stress that everything is thankfully okay at home. The family is good. You see, my dream job was always that of working at Kutsher's Hotel, and thankfully, I'll be starting there tomorrow

1 morning. That said, given that I am not ordinarily tipped until
2 Sunday, if you enjoyed being served by me, as much as I truly have
3 enjoyed serving you, it would be greatly appreciated if you could
4 take care of me financially right now.”

5 With only that, as many of the wives nudged their husbands to
6 extend their alligator arms and take care of the nice mensch before
7 them, “my rap” apparently no longer had to be extracted from me
8 as if it was the equivalent of the Squeeze song “Pulling Mussels
9 from a Shell.” I had broken out of my shell as if I was inspired once
10 again by the Elvis Presley classic “Jailhouse Rock.” Although I had
11 only worked four of the seven days that week at the Tamarack, my
12 semi-nonfiction story earned me nearly a week’s worth of tips. At
13 the time, it was an epiphany worthy of its place on my personal
14 Mt. Rushmore of life lessons. Still is, actually. It was an “Enabling
15 Moment” that has lasted my lifetime.

16 The Bottom Line #1: Tell your story. Believe that it’s a story worth
17 telling, and a story that needs to be heard. Hopefully, more often
18 than not, when told from your heart and mind with good intentions,
19 your story will resonate and put you on, with props to the Grateful
20 Dead, “The Golden Road (to Unlimited Devotion)” from those
21 within earshot.

22 The Bottom Line #2: Four of the greatest syllables and words ever
23 put together are quite simply, “Be nice, work hard.” Not only is the
24 foregoing mantra among the only things that one can control in his
25 or her life, and the right thing to do as well, but making the expres-
26 sion part of your inner fabric will put you in a position of life being
27 fairly okay, with the potential to have your dreams become your
28 reality. These are also the words that I most annoyingly repeated to
29 our three older boys when they were younger. Thankfully, they were
30 not ignored.

The Bottom Line #3: Piggybacking off my prior thoughts, it is my 1
firm belief that when it comes to the employer-employee relation- 2
ship, generally speaking an employee with a strong work ethic will, 3
in the vast majority of circumstances, be given the benefit of the 4
doubt over an employee whose mantra may appear at times to be 5
“Why do today that which I can do tomorrow?” 6

For those in need of a little music to hammer home the point, I 7
implore you to simultaneously channel Jay-Z, as in his song “Can’t 8
Knock the Hustle,” Abe Lincoln, who once profoundly uttered 9
“Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by 10
those who hustle,” and lastly, the “Queen of Disco” herself, namely 11
Donna Summer, and her song “She Works Hard for the Money.” 12
Work it, my friends. 13

The Bottom Line #4: With homage out to the legendary country 14
singer Chet Atkins, when done properly and in the right moment and 15
context, “It Never Hurts to Ask.” 16

The Bottom Line #5: Although the line is a bit overplayed, there is 17
nothing wrong with whatever your version of “living the dream” 18
may be. I’m not saying that you must or must not aim really high, 19
but if it’s realistic, there is a better chance of it becoming your 20
reality, as opposed to that of an unobtainable fantasy or a night- 21
mare come true. Stated a bit differently, with my teenage crush 22
on Deborah Harry of Blondie still etched in my mind, there is 23
nothing wrong with “Dreaming” (and unless I missed the memo, 24
why not, as there’s no admission fee to let your mind wander). 25

(Relentlessly) Seek and You Shall Find ... All Over Again

Although the three roommates I shared a quad with in my freshman year of college were all nice guys, the short version is that they didn't inspire me to channel Pink (about 35 years or so too soon) by screaming out in their presence that it's time to "Get This Party Started." If I was to find those I would want, homage to Basti Grub and Dizzy Monroe intended, to blurt out that "I Want to Party with You" after hanging with them for a few minutes, I'd have to make like Crocodile Dundee and go on a walkabout around the dorms.

So my journey for coolness began. As I strutted through the Ellicott housing complex where I was exiled from Buffalo's Main Street that freshman year, I felt like a rat on the prowl as I made my way through the maze of what was ten or so interconnected buildings designed by architects armed with marching orders from former Governor Nelson Rockefeller to create a new campus at the University of Buffalo where there could be no true central meeting place. Why, do you ask? Although rumor had it that Nelly wanted UB to be the Berkeley of the East, Nelson's vision included that of having the campus be riot- and protest-free. Apparently, unlike the '70s being good to me, other than financially speaking, I guess the '60s weren't to Nelson.

Just as you thought I was going off on a non sequitur from which there was no return, I recall learning in my psychology class a few semesters later that requiring a lab rat to navigate the twists and turns of a maze often promoted enhanced problem-solving capabilities. Although merely a non-scientific theory of mine, my version of making like Muhammed Ali as I bobbed and weaved my way through the rat maze that was the Richmond dorms ultimately

enabled me to solve the problem I was having (i.e., that of being temporarily friendless). Although it was twenty-five years before the White Stripes song came out in 2002, it only took me about fifteen minutes to metaphorically sing out to Joel, Walter, Brad, Sticks Moskowitz, Posty and Leeee, “We’re Going to Be Friends!”

You see, laughter and music screamed out to me from a dorm room for four on the other side of Richmond, interlaced with the sweet accents of those from Little Neck, Bayside, Oceanside and Manhasset ... all as Steely Dan’s new album *Aja* played in the background. To play off the title of a song from the album, I was “Home at Last.”

I walked into the room and in so many words, asked these Kings of Queens and Long Island if they were cool, to which my soon to be Pal Joey replied, “Why, are you cool?” My reply was, as you might surmise, “Sure I’m cool. Wanna be cool together?”

The Bottom Line: Props out to the name of the band I saw perform at The Paramount in Huntington in July of 2024, nearly fifty years later, our collective friendship has been nothing short of being “Cool Cool Cool.” Others have joined our band of brothers, including Jerry D and Mikey B. In fact, in August of 2024, five of us spent a few days on the Jersey Shore at Mikey’s house pretending we were eighteen again. Another reason why every now and then, we all need to make like Lou Reed and “Take a Walk on the Wild Side.”

Guns’ N’ Roses, Patience, and Being a Professional

Back when I was in high school, the legal age for drinking was eighteen years of age. Not to make light of it in any manner whatsoever, but for context, the word “awareness” apparently had

1 not become mainstream yet in the mid-'70s. I heard certainly not
2 heard of it until sometime during college.

3 By way of example, a good number of bars in our town when
4 the legal drinking age was eighteen, regularly served kids, emphasis
5 on kids, when they were fifteen to seventeen years of age. It was a
6 different age, with a different set of rules when compared to those
7 of today. We were in a sense treated as adults when we in fact were
8 anything but that. At best, as the title of the Jay-Z song goes, we
9 were barely "Coming of Age." I prefer to look back as my having
10 escaped from those times in one piece and relatively unscathed, as
11 being extremely fortunate.

12 One small tale that I remember quite vividly was a summer eve-
13 ning when in eleventh grade, I was at a pool party. Although (1)
14 age-wise I was barely a Stevie Nicks-like "Edge of Seventeen," and
15 (2) I may or may not have consumed a cocktail or two, given my
16 gifts of babble and a Guns N' Roses-like "Patience" for those in
17 need, I was called upon to talk down and metaphorically throw a
18 life preserver to, a kid who apparently felt that the bushes in which
19 he was performing the breaststroke, were that of the lap lane adja-
20 cent to the pool. He must've missed the memo pertaining to being
21 a "professional" when it came to controlling one's buzz. You know,
22 the one about drinking that speaks to alternating water with alcohol,
23 moderation generally being a good thing, and lastly, not consuming
24 liquid refreshments on an empty stomach?

25 Cutting to the chase, my friend made it safely through the night
26 with his faculties intact. For that evening at least, H2O became my
27 fellow teenager's new best friend. As for me, not only did I feel
28 good about the good deed I performed, but I also realized that I had
29 a knack for being patient when someone was occupying "space" or
30 a position diametrically opposed to that of my very own. Although
31 the classic song "The Waiting (Is the Hardest Part)" by Tom Petty
32 and the Heartbreakers wasn't written until five or six years later, and

a song by Migos and Drake almost thirty years after that, I simultaneously discovered that if I could somehow maintain my patience while performing my fair share of you can “Walk It Talk It” with the best of them, I could make a difference for friends, clients and my loved ones, with either my words, my actions, or a bit of both.

The Bottom Line #1: Sometimes a small dosage of Katy Perry’s “Small Talk” is what acts as an icebreaker to jumpstart a successful negotiation. Other times, whether I am channeling the Hank Williams, Jr. or Toby Keith version of the song, I have found that “A Little Less Talk and a Lot More Action” is what patience in negotiating is all about. Whether your pleasure tends to that of Adele’s “I’ll Be Waiting,” Green Day’s “Waiting” or alternatively, that of the Ray Davies and the Kinks’ “Tired of Waiting,” if one believes in (re)discovering the lost art of patience, there is a good chance that one day your adversary, client or colleague will see the light and serenade you that now very well may be the time, props out to Green Day once again aside, to take on a “When I Come Around” mentality to your line of thinking.

The Bottom Line #2: During a number of my podcasts with college student interviewees, as well as a top retail broker and an ultra-successful businessman, all said, “Patience” was at the forefront of their accomplishments and goals.

One of the students spoke about working on improving her patience, and being a more contemplative person. Another touched upon how his younger brother with autism had taught him the meaning of passion, patience and being a good team player.

As to the retail broker, he spoke of “planning with patience in mind, and beginning each week (and year) with a plan setting out objectives to accomplish your goals.” As for my friend who sold his business and continues on his road to success by making a difference

1 in the nonprofit arena, he spoke to me about patience and creating a
2 sane time table for reaching your goals.
3 I'm beginning to sense a theme here. Are patience and hard work
4 quite possibly the keys to success and happiness?

5 Being a Professional Revisited 6 AKA 7 The Water Song

8 **I**s "Turning Pro" the common denominator between Elton John's
9 "Madman Across the Water," Dave Matthews's "Don't Drink the
10 Water," Hot Tuna's "Water Song," *Toy Story*'s Buzz Lightyear, Jack
11 Johnson's "Drink the Water," Phish's "Sample in a Jar," the Clash's
12 "Career Opportunities," Luke Bryan's "Buzzkill," and the sitcom
13 *Classic Friends*?

14 For reasons unknown to me, as I was sitting on a plane flying out
15 to Las Vegas in May of 2024 to attend the always-fun ICSC Retail Real
16 Estate Conference, not to mention a few of Dead & Company's opening
17 shows at The Sphere, my mind drifted to years past when more than a
18 few real estate "professionals" I know were anything but professional
19 when it came to controlling their Huey Lewis and the News-like "Buzz
20 Buzz Buzz" at business events or parties. With that context behind us:

21 Partial Answer # 1: YES. Don't become one with the title of Dave
22 Matthews's song "Don't Drink the Water."

23 Partial Answer # 2: YES. Being Buzz Lightyear at a business event
24 is generally not a good thing, as making the title of Elton John's
25 album *Madman Across the Water* the words on your party hat, is
26 not the look one should leave colleagues or (no longer prospective)
27 clients with.

Partial Answer #3: With kudos out to the indie band of the same name 1
intended, that's a Yeah Yeah Yeahs once again. If you've simultane- 2
ously channeled the title of one of the more popular shows of the 3
'90s and 2000s, by subconsciously realizing that if you plan on day 4
drinking poolside or going way too hard on some other libation at a 5
business event or party, then one of your best *Friends* and mantras of 6
the day, as previously stated a bit differently, is definitely that of Hot 7
Tuna's "Water Song" and Jack Johnson's "Drink the Water." 8

Partial Answer #4: Absolutely, positively yes. With due props out 9
to a number of songs sung by Trey, Jon, Mike and Page of Phish, 10
here is a "Sample in a Jar" of what I'm trying to say. Ironically, 11
there are some who have written that the aforementioned song is 12
about an argument amongst friends while one was a bit too drunk. 13
Regardless, whether or not it was a "Simple" matter of when "Party 14
Time" came around for the "My Friend, My Friend" becoming a 15
"Waste" case while having lost a bit of his "Sanity" due to consum- 16
ing too much "Gumbo" aka a whole lot of "Bathtub Gin" one night, 17
when the morning came, I'd like to think that when "All Things 18
Reconsidered" took place after a good night's "Sleep," a healthy 19
serving of humble pie regret was on the table. 20

Not trying to preach here, as I may have indulged in more than 22
one or two cocktails on occasion, but long ago I got the memo per- 23
taining to being a professional when it came to a day or night of fun, 24
games and intended or unintended debauchery, especially when the 25
event being attended was one where endurance, schmoozing and 26
the creation of new, or building upon older, relationships was the 27
primary rule of engagement. You know, the memo about drinking 28
that speaks to alternating your pal Mr. Water with alcohol generally 29
being a conduit to stringing syllables together for the greater good 30
of all concerned? 31

1 The Full Answer: All of the above are common denominators to the
2 initial question posed, as well as a few below.

3 The Bottom Line: With only love out to the Ramones, the Clash,
4 Bobby Darin, Jules Verne and Luke Bryan, respectively in order, if
5 drinking or consuming whatever floats your boat does not include
6 “moderation” being front and center mantra-wise for you, whether
7 the business event is at “Rockaway Beach” in Queens or Encore
8 Beach in Vegas, if you don’t want your buzz to take any future
9 “Career Opportunities” of yours “Beyond the Sea” to the depths of
10 “20,000 Leagues Under the Sea,” my unsolicited advice is to take it
11 down a notch if and when partying, so your career doesn’t become a
12 “Buzzkill” of epic proportions.

13 **Creating Unlimited Storage When Your**
14 **Memory Is Making Like Mick and Telling**
15 **You to “Get Off of My Cloud”**

16 **B**ack when I was working in the Catskills, with no less than 100
17 items on the menu to choose from, rumor has it that my clien-
18 tele very well were the first to impart on their server the nightmare
19 question, “Can I have it on the side, please?” To the chagrin of those
20 in hospitality, this question soon became quite the rage, so much so
21 that its use spread downstate and down the eastern seaboard, first
22 to Orange County, then to Westchester, Long Island, Boca Raton,
23 and ultimately from sea to shining sea. The hotel’s guests must have
24 received a memo telling them that they had free rein to order all of
25 their dishes with many of their main ingredients to be ordered on
26 the side, or prepared in a special way, as in when Grandma Sally at
27 Table 9 asked me “Can I have a Cobb Salad bubala, but please put
28 the tomato, bacon (which should be well-done turkey bacon by the

way), chicken, very well done but no salt (as I'm allergic to salt, 1
which leaves my eyes looking like each has a ten-pound Samsonite 2
suitcase underneath them, and I can't have that as I'm going to a 3
wedding in three days for my second cousin's daughter twice re- 4
moved), and oh yeah, if you don't mind my sweet potato teenage 5
friend, some dressing on the side. Not that fatty dressing. You have 6
low-calorie Caesar? Actually, instead of chicken, how about shrimp? 7
With lemon squeezed in. NO, actually a side plate of lemons and 8
limes, I'll squeeze it in myself." 9

Although exaggerating the point a tad, as my head was spinning 10
trying to remember the preceding order, the next guest would go on 11
to say something along the lines of "I'll need a glass of prune juice 12
filled up halfway, in one of those nice tall yellow glasses, with a long 13
metal spoon in it so it doesn't crack, with the other half filled with 14
hot water. Maybe a 1/2 banana sliced as well. As Bruce Springsteen 15
will write in the late '80s, "It's the Tie That Binds" if you catch my 16
drift. Darling, you simply do not want to know what happened in 17
my bathroom last night ... oy vey, nobody should have to experi- 18
ence that. NOBODY, not even my neighbor back in Brooklyn, that 19
miserable eavesdropping, know-it-all Mrs. Kravitz." 20

Why am I telling you this story? Because back in the Borscht 21
Belt, you were not allowed to write one single word of a guest's 22
order down. You had to subconsciously channel the Peter Frampton 23
song "Show Me the Way" by finding some mind-bending memory 24
exercise to commit Sally's lunch order to memory, while taking the 25
order of another seven to eleven guests at her table before running 26
to the kitchen at the very back of dining room filled with nearly 27
three hundred guests. Inevitably, without fail, as I was metaphori- 28
cally becoming one with Mustang Sally's order after taking another 29
three orders, she then screamed out, "Could you be a dear, Harry 30
(to which I replied that was my grandfather's name), and screw the 31
Cobb Salad with everything on the side, I'll have a turkey burger on 32

1 a bagel, not one of those hard ones from three days ago, all scooped
2 out, lightly toasted, with a little chicken fat, tomato and fried onion,
3 and a cup of mushroom barley soup as well, but please try to get me
4 extra mushrooms in the cup, can you, dear?”

5 In order to somehow not screw up all of the orders, I knew I
6 had to create either a mnemonic or visual experience for myself.
7 Subconsciously, I may have been inspired in part by the Blondie
8 song “Picture This” as a means of watching Sally actually scarf-
9 ing down her meal. Sometimes I even created a song of her order
10 along with those of the other guests I was serving. If she hadn’t
11 changed her mind, Sally’s initial order would have been visualized
12 along the lines of watching that nasty Hall of Fame MLB player
13 Ty “Cobb” sliding into second base with only a piece of lettuce in
14 one hand, and also Sammy Davis, Jr. cutting out the hardened yolk
15 of the egg for little Sammy, all the while thinking “no Salty Dog,”
16 as Sally drank a hot tall cup of liquid mud with a tall metal spoon
17 garnish.

18 When I got to college and started to study accounting, knowing
19 that many of the principles I was being taught would never come
20 into play in real life, I started to make mnemonics for boring topics
21 such as auditing. It was the only way I could remember and memo-
22 rize something I cared so little about.

23 When studying for the bar exam, I took Pieper as my preparation
24 course. Why, you ask? Because one of John Pieper’s secrets was to
25 use mnemonics as a way for his students to remember his lessons.
26 In fact, I was so enamored with his style, I made mnemonics for
27 his mnemonics. As luck would have it, doing so came in handy, as
28 I spent the first ten minutes of the bar exam writing them down. If
29 I hadn’t, when a Constitutional Law essay question came up which
30 I had no clue how to answer during the exam, I wouldn’t have been
31 able to write about the subject somewhat eloquently.

The Bottom Line #1: Sometimes you are taught a lesson and you 1
don't even know it. I can't even begin to tell you how many times 2
I was asked for yet another lemon by a dining room guest. As a 3
consequence, though, instead of having a small cup of them at the 4
ready, I learned that having a large bowl of lemons instead was a 5
game changer. 6

On the all-by-my-lonesome Labor Day ride home to the Port 7
Authority by way of my old go-to, namely the Short Line bus, I 8
was dwelling on so many of the great times I had experienced in the 9
summer of '75. For some godforsaken reason, my mind wandered 10
aimlessly as to how I prepared that very day for lunch, the last offi- 11
cial meal of the summer. One of those seemingly mindless thoughts 12
was that of the bowl of lemons I would have at my station in the 13
dining room. It was one of the little things that made my job so much 14
easier to excel at. In retrospect, that lesson was the planting of the 15
seeds that more often than not, helped bear a bushel of the success- 16
ful fruits for me. In short, I began to think that if a healthy serving 17
of life's sour lemons was ever bestowed upon me, figuring out how 18
to turn those lemons into a vat of life's sweetest lemonade would 19
become my objective. 20

The Bottom Line #2: After my first summer working in the Jewish 21
Alps, when I started eleventh grade, I found myself utilizing all of 22
the mind tricks that my demanding summer guests forced me to 23
come up with. I was always a relatively good student, but that year, 24
with kudos out to Sally and many like her, I made a commitment to 25
being better at almost everything I did or encountered. Being great 26
would be great, but it wasn't the end-all for me. I wanted to be good 27
at many things, with the hope of being a master of many as opposed 28
to being that of a "master of just some or none." 29

Without spraining my shoulder by patting myself on my back 30
too much, are there a few things I consider myself somewhat great 31

1 or really good at? ABSOLUTELY, YES. But on the flip, there are
2 quite a few that I'm far from the top of what my game potentially
3 could or should be, and that is what keeps my heart, mind and soul
4 percolating and happy.

5 Countless times over the past decade, I have conveyed by way
6 of a question to those I have worked with, mentored or presented
7 to, the following: "What do you want to be when you grow up?
8 Mediocre, good or great? "Good" can be really good, and if "great"
9 doesn't come your way, "good" certainly doesn't s*ck." But medi-
10 ocrity is not, and should not, be an option."

11 I'm a Type "A" with a healthy dose of Type "B" and a lot of
12 "C" mixed in. I always knew that I would work as hard as, or even
13 harder than, the vast majority of people I came in contact with. But
14 I never really measured myself by whether or not I became or got
15 damn close to being the very best in my field, nor did I put pressure
16 on myself to do so. If it came, so be it, but if it didn't, that would
17 work for me as well. Quite simply, whether delusional or not, I knew
18 that if I, metaphorically speaking, worked my (with due homage
19 out the song by 1970s heavy metal pioneers Deep Purple) "Fingers
20 to the Bone," I could financially achieve a level of success that I'd
21 be comfortably happy with, while hopefully avoiding a perpetual
22 state of, props out to Jack White and the White Stripes, being "Bone
23 Broke." Going back to the well with Ritchie Blackmore and Deep
24 Purple once more, that ain't no "Smoke on the Water," my friends.

25 The Bottom Line #3: Create whatever retention system or systems
26 of your very own that work for you; they will enable you to acquire,
27 and thereafter retain, knowledge. Hopefully ones that will allow you
28 to have an Arnold Schwarzenegger-like *Total Recall* to bring to life
29 something that which you didn't even know existed in the outer lim-
30 its of your mind.

31