Bob: Bob Artemenko and spent 33 years with IBM. Came out of business school. Only other employer was the New York Yankees. I got drafted out of college and played a partial season and finished up business school and started with IBM after business school.

The story. I grew up in Chicago. I guess in a lot of ways that shape some things because I’m a city boy. It’s funny having going back there just recently for a wedding. I realized my neighborhood was all of six minutes from downtown. I mean, I didn’t have the Sears Tower to look at as a reference point but realized that I could see it from my street now when I go back there.

Let’s see. My dad as I mentioned to you, his father had come over from the Ukraine, came to Ellis Island back in the early 1900s. I guess over there, he was probably a peasant. He ended up working at the Cracker Jack Factory in Chicago stuffing little prizes and boxes. My dad was the youngest of eight kids. He was born on an apartment on the next street from where we lived, where I lived for 12 years in the city.

My mom was a nurse, had grown up in Ohio. Family were primarily farmers. They met and gotten married around 1950 or so and we’d lived in Chicago. I guess as I look at it, I think I was the first of my mom and dad’s family to have gone to a four-year college. Living in the city was sort of interesting. We were in a near Douglas Park in Chicago which was an ethnic neighborhood. Things were beginning to get a little bit dicey after a while.

There’s a gang called the Satan’s Disciples. That started up right across the street next to the grammar school. At age 12, my dad had worked for United Airlines. In fact, he worked with them for 40 years when they left Midway Airport and moved to O’Hare in near Chicago. Then we moved out to the suburbs. That was a dramatic change in my life. I went from a city kid, sheltered from the gangs, couldn’t get off the block with my bike, gym shoes wearing out every three weeks because of all the concrete and asphalt kind of a thing out to the burbs. It was a wonderful shock.

I mean, I could remember as a kid to sort of dreaming back to having to go back to the city. It wasn’t so much of a bad thing but where I was seemed to be so much better. That was good. That was wonderful for the family. That was three minutes from work at the United Offices that were in Arlington Heights.

I went to a junior high there which was a little bit of a shock because the elementary school system in Chicago went right to eighth grade and you just stayed in the classroom the whole time. All of a sudden, I was now having to change classes for the first time. I had the first of a number of tendonitis issues with my elbow from carrying every book I had. I didn’t trust the lockers. I just carried my books with me from place to place.

It was fun. It was a good thing. Did well in school. Wasn’t really working hard. Wasn’t a genius but things came fairly easily. Went into high school and I guess, you think informative kinds of changes like moving from Chicago that was a big deal. Ended up in the suburbs. I started at my high school and then all of a sudden they built a new high school. This was back in the mid ‘60s when baby boomers were really productive and hitting spikes as far as we were concerned.

There was a brand new high school that was going up and they redistricted things. I found that I had to ride 15 minutes passed the old high school I’ve gone to to go to the new one. Everybody was like, “Oh, shocks!” I learned the fight song. I’m getting comfortable with being a falcon. Now I’m going to this new place. What do they call them? They’re grenadiers. What’s a grenadier for peace sakes?

Anyway, we went off to this new high but that ended up being one of the best things that ever happened because I don’t think I would have made teams at the old school. When people gripe about new beginnings and having a new high school or something like that, I’m saying, “Man, you’ve got a whole new pool that you can move in. You’ve got the chance to make some teams that you otherwise wouldn’t.” That’s exactly what happened to me. I think what happens too is so much potential seems to be latent at times.

If you’re already able to tease it out, sometimes it’s just extinguished or it’s there and it just never has its chance. That was not the case. I had the chance to do some things. I’ve played basketball and baseball and baseball was the big thing. High school was good. I played a number of varsity sports but I was good at baseball and was a pitcher and a shortstop in high school. That high school experience of being able to go to a brand new place was a good thing.

Since my parents really had not finished a four-year program or whatever which was not a problem. Their concern for me was that I just go to college. Just go find a place and if you go to any one of them, it’s got to be good. I was all set up to go to Northern Illinois University. The college coach rather there was ready to let me try out but there were no promises. There sure wasn’t any kind of scholarship. They had a pretty good team. It was a teachers college of sort so it was pretty good size. About 60 miles from Chicago.

I was going to go there. I wasn’t exactly sure what I was going to study. I was interested in playing some baseball. No promises. I could go try out in the spring time. In the middle of all that, there was a biology teacher at the high school who had been a varsity coach but had retired. He said, “You know, I know the coach at Northwestern. I’ll just give him a call and see what can happen.”

He called the Northwestern coach and the guy, sight unseen with this call, the guy said, “Well, I can’t do anything for your freshman year but I can give you tuition scholarship for the next three years. So, why don’t you come here?” I mean, I lost my deposit which was not a big problem at the Northern Illinois University and hadn’t taken my SAT test because all you needed to go to this other school was the ACT, so I had to go sit for my SAT test and so on and so forth. Ended up just at a great school.

I never thought … It’s to draw the line from near west side of Chicago in eighth grade to being able to go to Northwestern about five years later was not anything that I really would have done or expected. Ended up there. There’s an interesting thing. I would guess you might have found that in the army or you find that when you go to your school is that all of a sudden, the people you’re with have been paired down to be a little bit more similar to you at least in terms of interests and whatever mental agility you may have or not have and so on and so forth.

All of a sudden, there were a lot of folks that were very familiar, a lot of new friends. Friends beyond what I was able to find in high school, not that they were bad guys but just had a lot more in common. It just was a very positive experience. Began the major in economics and take a lot of political science courses. I remember the opening economics professor I had was this guy named Robert Eisner who had been on the Council of Economic Advisers.

I mean, all I was able to pull out of that thing was a C. This guy used to give 25 question multiple choice test for midterms and finals and he used to take off for wrong answers. You had to think carefully before you answer these questions because if you got it wrong, you even got more off than if you just left it blank. Anyway, I think there was an economic statement in there somewhere.

Went to school. It was an interesting time because right back around 1969, the NCAA was trying to decide whether they were going to have freshmen be eligible for varsity sports or not. They decided that they were going to be eligible for varsity sports but Northwestern said, “I will do it next year.” Unfortunately with Northwestern and everything but football, they were a little bit blasé about some of these things.

I didn’t really have a freshmen year. We didn’t have any games. We just practiced and practiced with the varsity. Sophomore year, I started at shortstop and Northwestern unfortunately was not much of a power in terms of baseball. I think we managed to beat Iowa that one year. Other than that, we’re like 2-19 and we really struggled.

Junior year, we started to do a little bit better. I’d only played shortstop before and the coach just said, “Look, you’ve really got a good arm. You need to pitch for us too.” I had pitched in high school but I really … Pitchers is a lot in terms of a group or a set of people. I’m not really attracted to. They’re sort of prima donnas. They only work every four or five days. They don’t get to do any. Nothing is expected of them offensively and so on and so forth.

I really said, “Look, if I’m going to do this, I’m just going to play every day and play shortstop.” He said, “Look, you should pitch. You should pitch too.” This was fun. Junior year, I started to pitch and my first win as a pitcher in college was a no-hitter against Wheaton College. Unfortunately, Wheaton College didn’t get to go on any spring trips or I don’t think they went on much of one.

We were playing in a very cool Chicago land spring. I think inside fastballs where nothing anyone wanted to have to take on with the wooden bats at the time. It was going to be hard to match things from that start. From then on, for the next two years, the Big Ten Season is played with two double hitters on each weekend on a Friday and a Saturday. So we played two games. Friday, two games, Saturday.

I would pitch the first game at the double hitter on a Friday and I’d play shortstop the next three games. It couldn’t be any better than that. It’s one thing not to pitch because you want to play shortstop. To be able to do that, you can play shortstop when you’re not pitching was a good deal. It was great for the first time. Northwestern team finally won 10 games in the Big Ten.

That was the first time in more than … since the college opened about 100 years prior. We didn’t win the Big Ten Championship but it was very much of a moral victory of sorts to have gotten through that and to do well. In the meantime, very important thing that happened which I met a girl who ended up being my wife, who I’ve been married to for coming on 39 years. She was a real sweetie. She didn’t make it to my no-hitter because she had a fainting spell before that. So she didn’t get to see that but she got to see some other stuff which was good.

Finished up at Northwestern. The hope was that there might be an opportunity to get drafted. They had the free agent draft on a June afternoon. Excuse me. I had a fraternity brother on the team who was an outfielder. Midafternoon, he got word that he’d been drafted by Minnesota. So that was great for him and I hadn’t heard anything.

I went and just took a shower later in the day because I figured, “Well, it just had passed me by.” Then someone said, “Hey.” They’d read something in the paper where I’ve been drafted by the Yankees.” I finally got a call from them after someone had seen in the paper saying, “Hey.” I was drafted in the 19th round by the New York Yankees. Had a little discussion with the scout and got myself packed up to go in about two or three weeks’ time to Upstate New York and play baseball up there.

In the meantime had also applied to business school at Northwestern. That was back in the day when they weren’t so interested in having me go off and work for a number of years before you came back into the school. We went ahead and applied for that. I was going to start in the fall hopefully and then I was going to go play baseball in the Yankee organization over that summer.

I guess, that was another step. A little bit of a dream continues here. I got to go off and go do that. Ended up for me it being a dream summer. I had pitched in high school and then in college but I ended up having the best season that I ever had in that first year led the league and on average struck out about one person every inning. At the end of the season, went up to the Double-A Team which is where Bobby Cox was the manager at the time. So I got to meet him a little bit. I was only there for a very short period of time. Won a game and the season closed out and I found myself in business school and still playing baseball.

I started up in business school and that was a good thing. I was in marketing and finance. It was a very special experience to be able to go to Northwestern’s business school at the time because they just built a brand new building. We literally came in to the first day of class, pulled the plastic off of the chairs and sat down in these various lecture rooms and be instructed.

I did that. They run a trimester system. So they had fall, winter and spring quarters. I went to school fall and winter and then asked the dean of the school if my buddy and I, in fact my catcher who was also going to business school there and said, “We wanted to go to spring training.” He said, “No problem. We can make an exception for that. You guys can go off the spring training and when you get back, you get back and we’ll welcome you with open arms.” So it was a nice situation. He was real gracious about that.

That began another transition for me because baseball became just a lot more business. High school baseball, college baseball was a lot of fun. That first year of professional baseball was a lot of fun because we’re like a college all-star team. After that, when you see a good number of your friends disappear and get cut and released and it gets very serious as far as how much do you really want to do this. By the way, it’s not fair. You’ve got people you’re competing against that have got big contracts associated with them so they got to give them extra looks because they don’t have that much vested in you necessarily depending upon what the economics were and the details of your signing and so on and so forth.

In any case, I went there started out on the Double-A Roster where I finished the prior year. I was on this Double-A Roster with Ron Guidry and a guy named Tippy Martinez who had pitched for Baltimore and Scott McGregor that played for Baltimore and so on and so forth. Yankees traded them all off except for Guidry.

It was a very interesting time. I got a little bit more of a taste of what would be involved with directly moving ahead in this. Spring training broke and I got to sign to Kinston, North Carolina. I went to Kinston. Kinston was an interesting place to play baseball. Very different than Chicago or Northwestern or so on and so forth. They played in the Carolina League, Rocky Mount, Salem, Wilson, Lynchburg and so on and so forth.

I lasted until June 1st that season. I had a 4-4 record and punched out and went back to business school. I went in and when I told the coach that I’d had enough because it really wasn’t any fun anymore, he said, “But you know, you’re on the list.” I said, “Well, you should have told me I was on the list before.” There was a little management lesson in there. Some courage you keep to your chest and some courage you probably need to play with people. It takes a while to figure that out.

Anyway, I just went back to business school. Finished that first year of business school picking up that last quarter. Gotten married and my wife and I finished a last year of graduate school together. Married in off campus housing. Then I guess the IBM story begins. So I got through business school. My wife got through her speech pathology program at Northwestern. I interviewed. The key job that you want coming out of Northwestern because it’s a great marketing school, you are talking about how good Kennesaw is as far as entrepreneurship and so on and so forth.

Northwestern business school will do whatever they have to do to try to stay on top from a marketing standpoint. Appropriately indoctrinated, I wanted to go into advertising or go work for Procter & Gamble. I had an opportunity interview for what would have been I guess a dream job at the time. I went and talk to Wilson Sporting Goods and I really tried to position myself as a practitioner of a team sport and then someone that had this marketing savvy and capabilities and so on and so forth.

That was a tough situation as far as being able to compete because they ended up being able to really get people that both had very similar credentials and experience and I had no experience other than playing baseball but they were looking for marketeers and not baseball players at the time.

I got a talk to IBM and the way that IBM works at the time was there were … The entry point in the IBM for the most part were through its branch offices. They had large system sales and smaller system sales. There was a large system sales office in the same town that the school was in Northwestern in Evanston. I interviewed the branch manager there. He hired seven people from Northwestern that year and three of us who had been all Big Ten and something or others.

I mean, the guy like jocks and I’ll take it. It worked out well except that I’d finished college. I finished two years of business school and now IBM wanted me to go to school for a year and a half. I’m thinking, “I’m really tried to go into school,” but there was really nothing that I could do because at the time, that’s the way they work. You entered through the branch office if you wanted to go through the sales side of things and then the sales organization basically fed 70% of the rest of the company.

I went to various classes in Endicott, in Chicago, in other places in Upstate New York. After a year and a half was put on quote. That’s the whole thing. I finished school June 22nd. One year, started with IBM July 1st and a year and a half later, they basically said, “Okay. Here’s your territory. You’re good to go.” That was I think very interesting because as you’re starting to connect the dots as a young adult and assemble your world view and those parts of your world view that are associated with how business works and so on and so forth, one of the main things you’re confronted with is, “Are salesmen born as supposed to be made?” because if they’re born and I’m not one, this is going to be really hard work.

The great thing about the year and a half training program was they basically took you through a basic training and said, “Look, you know, you might be a charismatic kind of a person, you might be a born salesperson but if you’re just reasonably intelligent and you go through these procedures that we set up, it’s hard work in organization. It’s what it is. If people like you along the way, well, so much better but you can succeed at this if you work at it. It might be a little bit like soldiering, in fact. There’s a lot that can be done with the discipline and the understanding of how things work and the application of experience that gets distilled into the training and so on and so forth.”

I started in to my sales experience and it was good. It was good. It was strange and that as a 22, 23-year-old, you’re thrown in to sell these big ticket kinds of things with folks that are in some cases used to chewing up folks that are twice your age trying to get good value from them and so on and so forth. Then again, to the extent that they sense that you’re really working for them and with them. You could do well. You had a shot to do well in any case.

The first year was good. Had a couple of small companies. They bought some stuff and that worked out well. Got a chance to go to my first 100% club and that is part of the motivation and incentive process that not only rewards you with stuff but also allows you to move with other people that have succeeded. It goes back to the thought of these different times in your life where you’re filtered into a certain group of people and you have a chance to be with and communicate with them.

Then that has a compounding effect of allowing all those different blaze to be sharpened a little bit more. Those were fun experiences going to 100% clubs. So I was in that branch for three years and got my 300% clubs and was able to bump into a person, a guy and I just said, “Well, look. You know, what’s it take to go do something else in IBM because I like selling and I’m still a young guy and think there’s more that I can do in selling but I also would be interested in moving ahead.”

He said, “Well, hey. Thanks for sharing that with me.” Next thing I know I was in what was called a Perspectives Class where they were just talking a little bit more about what else can you do at IBM and so on and so forth. Not too long after that, had a chance to go into a staff job. Although things have changed very significantly at IBM in terms of what the career paths were, back in the early ‘70s, if you started at IBM and you were interested in what it would take to be the chairman, somebody could actually sit down on a piece of paper and map out the 16 jobs that you would probably have to get there because the last four or five chairman had done it that way.

It was this ping-ponging back between line and staff job where you’d be a salesman and then you’d go be a staff person that supported salesmen and then you’d be a sales manager and then you’d be a staff person that would support sales managers. Then from there you’d become a branch manager and then from there, so you just went back and forth between staff and line management. Probably similar to the armed services in some ways.

In any case, got a promotion into a staff job. Did reasonably well there and then became a sales manager in the south side of Chicago. That was a little bit strenuous. If you know the geography of Chicago, I mean, I had lived 30 miles north of the loop and my job was 30 miles south of the loop. That was a little bit of a drag for a year but it was a great experience. It was a great opportunity to deal with a part of the city that I hadn’t had a chance to work with the whole south side of Chicago in terms of the Checker Cab Company and The Darling Company which was a beef renderer.

I don’t know if you know about beef rendering but they basically would dismantle beef and use all the different … There’s a lot to use there besides meat. Anyway, these were some of the delightful customers we had down there. That was a chance to go as a sales manager, work with another whole set of clientele. Then they had mercy on me and moved me north a little bit closer to home and I had a chance to work with Baxter Labs, Kraft Foods, American Hospital Supply, Sara Lee, I mean, just a whole different set of customers but those were good experiences. Those were good experiences.

A lot of the situations I was in led to a sense of in terms of having grown up in the city, having played on baseball teams that had done nothing other than finish last and had the chance to do better in subsequent seasons and so on and so forth. My sense was I think of myself as an optimist but that said, I never really expected things to go to right. A good thing that happens in baseball, you’re trying to win but at any point in time, it’s all about having to deal with errors, having to deal with high points in the performance of the other team and how you’re going to manage to that and just anomalies that would occur.

The great thing about a game for instance, a baseball game is that it’s like a life that occurs in seven or nine innings. You get to keep replaying it or you get to start over. In some of these, you die and in some of them you live but by having the chance to experience it each time, you develop muscles, physically, mentally and emotionally to try to deal with adversity.

Now this is not dying on the battlefield by any means but the very interesting intellectual and physical and emotional exercises that occur. When I came into the branch office or when you deal with sales situations and you get to know or a customer discontinues equipment and it comes back and so on and so forth, it doesn’t make you happy by any means. This is standard experience in a baseball game. You just have to get up and continue and you may not prevail but it doesn’t do you any good to just ring your hands and quit.

You’d continue on with these things and I just was thinking about being a marketing manager, a fairly young marketing manager. When I moved from the south side of Chicago to the north side of Chicago to have these more sophisticated accounts and more white collar area in the North Shore of Chicago and so on and so forth, I inherited a person that thought he was the best salesperson in the whole Chicago area, the thousands of sales people that were there.

He was a one-appraised individual which meant that he had a far-exceeded rating. He had multiple far-exceeded ratings. He really was outstanding. His sense when he had the opportunity to have a new manager because he was just a career salesman was that, “Okay.” It was his turn to train the new salesman, sales manager rather and there were sets of expectations that were a little bit … How do we say? Confusing for the new salesman who typical in IBM as much as they try to do training, there’s no training to become a first line manager with the variety of people that you might come up against.

I guess the thing that I want to share was that that was the very first time that I had to deal with the fact that whatever perspectives I might have had that were solely determined by age and general respect for persons which I would never want to lose but had to be subordinated at least at some times to the fact that I had responsibilities, I had a job to do.

Then I had a need to meet out some kind of justice appropriately. Not so much from a punishment standpoint but just in terms of fairness to the other employees and being able to step up and do some hard things as a manager which again they can talk about but you don’t know what they’re talking about until you have to experience it.

The point was we ended up being good friends. I ended up hosting his Quarter Century Club Luncheon which was a very positive experience and got everyone to come that he wanted to have come and so on and so forth. There were some real collisions with him in terms of having to say, “For as much as you have been a far-exceeds performer for the last three years, this year is a good year but it’s not a far-exceeds year and you have to live with a different kind of rating.”

After I cringed and gave that out, there was a better relationship with that person because for years, so many marketing managers that would come in and roll back out the door would find themselves in a situation where, “Why am I going to make any ways? I’ll just give him a far-exceeds. I’ll make my quota and we’ll move on and we’ll leave the trauma to the next sales manager to try to deal with this.” It was a real good experience to have had as a sales manager. it complimented a set of things that were not so subtle and sublime that I had to deal with in the other office which was just dealing with slugging it out, trying to sell a new small territory and so on and so forth.

I felt like my first line sales management experience was really pretty good. I got myself graciously into two situations. One with sophisticated customers and sales personnel that really needed a different kind of coaching that some brand new people calling on new accounts that I had in another situation. I went into a staff job and the staff job was called marketing practices.

This was a very interesting position at IBM at the time because what happened, what we would find ourselves in as a company was that we tried to operate and did operate with the highest of ethics and consistency and equal treatment for all of our customers but as much as you try to do that with as many transactions as we had and as many situations that you had to deal with, there was always going to be something that went off the rails.

We could either deal with them and go to war on each one of them or you would take some number of people across the country that had reasonably good judgment and just say, “Just deal with it and do the right thing. Make these things go away but do so with some amount of appropriate justification and documentation.”

For instance and this continues to amaze me now as I think back at it as to how easily you could get yourself in some trouble as a customer or as a vendor and a customer. You go sell a four million dollar large computer to a customer and it immediately goes on a warranty for the first year. That warranty just covers absolutely everything. Think of the best car warranty you can think of right now. Everything is taken care of. Replace anything, power supplies, circuits, all the labors associated with it and so on and so forth.

You had to be intentional about putting it on a maintenance contract after warranty. The system was very unforgiving if all of a sudden you wanted to replace a component or needed to replace a component on a machine and you’re off warranty. There were components on this machines that cost $250,000. All of a sudden, one of your best customers would have attended to go on warranty on a maintenance contract after warranty did not has a problem.

All of a sudden they get a bill from IBM for $250,000. What do they do? In a lot of cases, the salesman may have not been as judicious about going out there and signing them up for it. May not have even informed them. Sometimes customers could do things like, “Just want to let you know now for this new piece of equipment, a year from now when it goes off warranty, I want to put it on a maintenance contract.”

Stuff like that wouldn’t happen. What we would do is we would just make that stuff go away. You couldn’t go advertise that because you could get gained on that potentially. We very quietly would sit in these headquarters offices and when customers would have issues like that or in certain situations where one of our employees would violate one of our internal business practices, this would be a way to try to deal with it not necessarily have to take it to very high levels in a corporation.

We had a manager that gave us certain levels of responsibility in terms of sizes of transactions we can deal with. That was an intense two and a half years of just rapid fire 12 to 20 situations a day where normal business activity had just gone a little bit a rye. We had to straighten it back out. You just had to pick it back up, put it on its feet and move forward because you needed to continue to have a relationship with the customer.

The extra $250,000 for this part that we were going maybe sell them because they were off warranty wasn’t money that we should have expected anyway. So we just took care of it. I guess in terms of formative kinds of things that I had a chance to do, it was as if there was a pipe with huge numbers of transactions going through it.

I’m just going to take from the top this whole idea of marketing practices. My staff job after sales was to work in an area called marketing practices. Marketing practices were a group of ex-sales managers that would be distributed regionally to deal with business transactions that had gone bad. You can imagine with the cost of computers, the complexities of our contracts, the difference in cost between a $250,000 part having to be replaced on or off of warranty or on or off of a maintenance contract was a very big deal.

These were not situations where you could find yourself with a very large company at General Motors or whoever in a situation where you’re telling them that you appreciate their business each year but oh, by the way, they tripped on one part of a contract which was either unclear or we should have been more helpful with and sorry, but they have to pay this huge bill.

Not all of these things were necessarily forgiven but the point was you can only anticipate so much with your business practices and your contracts. You need to find a just and fair way to deal with these things so they don’t affect business relationships. I guess that’s probably the biggest thing here is how can we maintain business relationships with people while still abiding by all the contracts and all of the economics that are involved there because relationships should take precedence over it.

I guess that’s probably if there was anything and probably anything I’m going to talk about, it’s the fact that relationships take precedence over transactions. It gets very gooey. It gets very complicated but that’s what you want to have happen. You want to sustain the relationship through the different things that happen and go bump in the night. That was what we did in the area of business practices.

As I just reflect on different things that I could have done after having been a sales manager, that was really the best, most intense course on the next level of business management that I could have gone through because it just required you to look at all of the collisions that were taking place between your transactions, your contracts, the personalities, what you are trying to get done with a customer and then put a template of fairness in the overall relationship on it and then try to move forward from that.

You at most cases can manage it when things stay in the grooves, stay in all the process lines, stay in the flowchart lines but you end up being able to manage effectively over the long term if you can deal with these anomalies. That really helped deal with anomalies because as is the case with moving to higher levels of responsibility, the only thing you’re normally getting to deal with are the things that no one else wants to touch.

That was a good experience. Then after that, I really got a chance to do what for most IBM sales people would be their dream job which was to become a branch manager. That was just a great opportunity. I’d found myself in a situation where as good as this job was in business practices, it was not one of the best paths forward in terms of being able to get the next line job.

They basically said, “Look, I know that some qualified people do one staff job and move to a branch manager position. You’re going to need to do another staff job to be in the position. No promises even with this. You’re going to need to move to New York and do this job related to distributing PC’s to all the branch managers because PC’s are brand new and we can’t expect people to sell PC’s which we’re hoping are going to be the next wave of this computer revolution. We can’t expect branch managers to sell them if they don’t know how to use them and if they don’t have any experience with them. How are they going to lead the troops into selling these things? We want you to do this assignment.”

As you look at ripples in the waves that occurred that give you a chance to change and adjust. That was a huge change. I’d been in Chicago all my life. I mean, that was home. I had all my friends from college around and my family was there. Economically, things were working and they said, “You know, you got to move to the northeast.” You’re looking at houses two or three times as much as what years was worth. That also was a time when mortgage rates were 12% or 14%.

We moved east for just the opportunity to go possibly get the branch manager’s job and I did this new job. That itself was another turning point in terms of an experience similar to the marketing practices position giving you a chance to see lots of different transactions and judicate them and process them to good relationship endings.

I got plopped into this new job where I had to work in distributing these PC’s in a world that hadn’t really been using PC’s. I mean, very few people knew what spreadsheets were. Very few people thought that you could really do anything with a personal computer at home other than maybe put recipes on it. You could put recipes on it or you could play some games on it. I mean, it was spooky as much as it directs our life and the sons and daughters of PC’s having moved on to iPads and so on and so forth to realize that back then, there was no imagination as to really what to do with a PC.

At any case, I had to hire a small staff that would work and be the experts and leaders in this area and there weren’t any. They were just catch as catch can, a little person over here, a little person over there that for whatever reason, they just got out of college and in their last year of college, they learned how to do a spreadsheet. Then they were thrown into a branch office and they put some branch office activities on a spreadsheet. There was one or two of them in the whole country.

To be able to go find those people, it was almost the case of you weren’t looking for practitioners at the time, you were looking for artists because no one … All the mainstream folks hadn’t really accepted it yet. All the ones that had got into it were the ones that had time on their hands which were just experimenting with it.

In any case, that was a great experience for me personally to go try to find people that had skill to do this stuff and have them either find them locally in New York or have them move to New York and experience what I had except they were working for me and they weren’t as … I was far from rich but I was more financially well off than these people I was trying to hire to come to New York.

That was just a good experience in saying, “Look, this is not a perfect situation. You’re going to have to work with whoever you can find that’s got the skill. Find the best you can but you just have to make it work. By the way, you’re trying to get in and out of this thing quickly, succeed or fail and you don’t have months to make this happen.”

I ended up pulling together this group of very good people but they came out of situations that were in some cases they were very readily let go by folks because they didn’t want artists on their team. I had a situation with one person where they were so talented musically that they had been pulled in to be performers at all the last 200% or 300% clubs which pulled them out of their jobs like four months out of the year. They had low performance ratings because when they came back, they just couldn’t pick up quickly enough on it before they had to go and play the piano again at the next 100% club.

It was an interesting group of people. It was great to try to … As I look back at the different things that I had a chance to do, the projects that started out with things initially brought to you all over the floor and saying. “Would you make some order of this and try to go hit out on a bearing of 180 degrees and hit this point?” Those were some of the most frustrating and hard but the most rewarding and where I found that I had some capability to go do those things.

We got stuff together. We got ourselves organized. It was nothing more than becoming … We were like squirrels gathering nuts except the squirrels were me and my staff and the nuts were the little spreadsheets that all these little creative people all over the company had started to pull together. We just brought them in. We put them on floppy disks.

In some cases, we would play with them a little bit but we didn’t have a lot of software strength like you’d find a thing where they had somebody to build a little spreadsheet. They would work with three sales managers. We knew we had branch offices that had sometimes seven sales managers. We’d bring the thing back in and just change the spreadsheet, put another few more columns and it could handle 10 sales managers in it.

Then we’d send it back out to everybody. It ended up being a wonderful thing. We assembled these different spreadsheets from the branch offices and did a couple rounds of it because what would happen is you would take the stuff that had originally just sprouted on its own, document it a little bit, send it back out and you would do another round of germination.

Other things would be discovered that you just missed the first time around. People would have amplifications on it. The other thing that would happen too was there started to be some additional contagion activity because managers became aware of this.

Now, the management thing is not necessarily always a good thing but the point is there are a couple of managers that were creative types, were hands in the dirt types, had their own set of issues that they wanted to solve. So they got involved in doing this. All of a sudden, these sets of applications went from very rudimentary, “Okay. It will just calculate what the sales commissions are or it will just monitor a sales context in a branch office to a spreadsheet that collected all the opportunities for the branch office, put them into a model through some expected values against them and you had a performance model for the year.”

Not unlike what happened with data processing, you find whole divisions now that are run by PC’s and not some mainframe SAP computer. The idea is if you’re a large company, you’d love to be able to afford a 20-million-dollar enterprise platform but in lieu of that, a creative person with a spreadsheet which ends up operating a relational database can go a long way. That was the beginnings of what we were getting into. That worked out pretty well and had a chance to become a branch manager and was a branch manager in New York City responsible for process industry.

Process industry at the time were the oil companies, the pharmaceutical companies and the consumer goods companies. We had Mobil Oil at the time and Texaco. We had Nabisco. We had Pfizer. It was a large branch but 120 people in it. Three different chunks of functionality in it, 25 to 30 people that did sales, 25 to 30 people that did technical support. Then the rest of them that tried to keep all of that in order from an administrative standpoint, get the equipment shipped, ordered and shipped and cared for and under contract and so on and so forth.

That was the next level of collision with reality being in New York City where you’d have some employees with AIDS, some employees that were running into emotional issues because of a lot of pressure in the job and the pace of living and working in the city and so on and so forth.

The new experience of having long time New Yorkers coming to your office, put their foot or fist on your desk and saying, “Where’s my award?” kind of a thing for doing X, Y or Z. For a guy that came up out of the Midwest and which is trying to manage relationships, makes sales kind of things happen and so on and so forth. It was a very interesting situation for me.

I guess, that’s when you start to have to make a decision of what the world view that you’re going to live with or the world view that you’re going to die with because if you just sell out to succeeding whatever the case might be, you mean not at all like the person that you’re going to be. I guess, one of the main things is however it is that you choose to do that you need to move slowly enough to make the right decisions with it.

I think that if IBM doesn’t and in many companies, I wouldn’t just put this on IBM, it’s very hard to teach you what happens to you as a first line manager but as a second or third line manager, the first time you’re experiencing that, you’ve got to realize that if you’re trying to be just a popular person that is going to be a very difficult situation that if you’re trying to be friends with everybody as much as you should be friendly, I think that’s not going to work.

That you’ve got a lot of eyes on you that are ready to launch on any shortcut that you yourself get used to making because that will be considered acceptable because we see it as a pattern in leadership. Then somehow or in all of that to coordinate that with the things that are required of you from above. That was a real growth period. As I think probably any number of us that have had responsibilities would think back on that.

First of all, that’s where you make some really good friends because sooner or later and part of that process, you need to identify colleagues and mentors that are coming from a couple of different categories. Number one, they’re experiencing the same thing as you are and you need to steal from one another’s learning curves. Number two, you find mentors who that you can go to where you can share some of the problem solving without being blown out of the water because you’ve come off as weak or you’ve confessed someone that’s a judge.

That was the tail of those times. There was an aura or there was a context in New York City which was, “If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere.” By the way, that says that this place is different. Hence, we run by a different set of rules. That may work in Chicago or San Francisco but it doesn’t work here in New York or whatever.

That was the theme of the management at the time. You needed to lock yourself in with that and act accordingly because that was the culture that was omitted. That was a set of expectations which were laid out. Then at the same time, you need to manager your own domain and determine how much of that you would pass through and how much of your own culture you would create.

I guess, as I think about it, this is where you have some of your judgment congeal on how you’re going to do anything moving forward and what you’re going to prioritize. I guess, I would go back to this thing that I had mentioned before which is I came to the conclusion that whatever I did with whoever I worked with whether it was my management or my peers or the people that were in my organization.

Then it’s important to say, “Were they in the organization as admin people or were they in the organization as quota-carrying performers?” That they all needed to be treated fairly and they all needed to be encouraged and that they are person who would in my acknowledgment of it would come before whatever was potentially expected of them from a performance standpoint.

I wasn’t off the hook and they weren’t off the hook in what we were expected to do. First and foremost, they were people and they need to leave the office understanding that I respected them first as a person and then secondly as someone that did the job. I just had to accept whatever the consequences were that came from that.

There were discontinuities in that space. There were discontinuities in that theory where you might have situations where people were just completely disconnected where they were or did not fit in the position. It would be best for them and best for the company if they had a chance to fly or blossom somewhere else. Those are very hard to do. Those extractions just are not clean kinds of things.

I guess, maybe this is where the serial recounting of my career doesn’t necessarily end but maybe we talked more generally about anecdotes or situations or problem solving or philosophy or world view on some of these things. Much of which in my case is grounded in my Christianity because I guess, if you had to net out what this overall theory was it’s love God and love people. I mean, that’s basically the categorization for this whole thing.

I think a wakeup call for me began to be all my actions should be build off of some kind of world view, some kind of sense of what’s right and wrong, what’s true and not true, what I prioritize. One of the things that had happened to me in baseball was I had a chance to come under the mentoring of a guy that was my wife-to-be’s boss who ran a dude ranch in Colorado. His name was Bob Foster. He ran the Lost Valley Ranch. He was associated with an organization called The Navigators.

He sent me some workbooks and I went through these workbooks. This is a flashback 20 years from where I was telling the story having become a branch manager. Anyway, he just said, “Hey, what do you think about who God is? You need to make a call one way or the other on it.” The call that I made was basically that, “Hey, I need to live my life in a way that honors God.” What that means is to love God with all my heart, soul and mind and love my neighbor as myself.

That did not mean for me to pack it in and become a missionary or become a preacher. It meant for me to continue being a baseball player, going back to business school and go work for whoever I was going to work for. Essentially, when things got tough and I didn’t know what to do which way to go, how hard to press, I needed to go into that space and that space has worked well. Not so much as judging it from the standpoint of size of 401K or current standard of living but just ability to live with myself right now and to have a sense of where I’m going from here.

There were any number of strings, of pearls, of situations that occurred as you go through the rest of my career and it went basically from doing the branch manager thing. The branch manager thing was the last opportunity that I had to be as really a line manager in the field. Then I went to marketing jobs which low and behold was fine. I was finally having a chance to go work in the area that I was trained in in business school which was great.

It really was worth of my heart was because the big things that I’ve always wanted to do was to decompose biggest, ugliest, strangest situations, take them apart, be able to explain to people what that problem was and then begin to work with what the alternatives were with putting it back together.

The jobs that I had after the branch manager job then went into marketing for a server brand of ours to being a person working with other large companies and trying to figure out with them if IBM could partner with them to bring some technologies in that we could work on together to go forward with it.

It’s the next wave of technology whether it would be speech recognition or orders of magnitudes, greater amount of storage that you could make available to customers, just completely new methods as far as how to make chips and so on and so forth that we’d have to anticipate what customers needed 30 years from now to put together. I mean, just real blurry kind of stuff.

I enjoyed trying to decompose and then come up with a solution for it of some sort. That led me through any number of rather interesting personnel and leadership situations that I tried to basically address with a sense of keeping the people first somehow or other.

It wasn’t so much that all of a sudden working in a particular corporation I was in took the second tear it all. That was still the job that had to be done but the means in which it would be done which would be to try to uphold people and uphold their spirits and realize that they were appreciated as people more than workers.

They had to know that they were rewarded for working well. They had to know that they could move up the company for working well and performing. It wasn’t the case where there was a new job and that was just to be friend of Bob or to adapt his world view. That was not what would get them salary increase or so on and so forth. As far as my dealings with them, they needed to be affirmed as people first. Their worth was associated with who they were as people as supposed to how they performed.

That there was some dedication to them at least from me no matter how undedicated the company might feel towards them which as I’m thinking is fairly a possible thing to do but you try to do that because at any one point in time, there’s a reasonable percentage people that you’re working for that aren’t at all fulfilled in the job that they’re in. You don’t want to participate in their demise in terms of their self-image by ignoring the fact that they’re a person that’s trying to this particular job.

That’s been good. I’ll tell you one of the things that’s been positive about is there are many more people out there than you might imagine that think the same way. The problem is it’s really hard to connect with them horizontally in the workplace. There’s no conspiracy to take anything over. In fact, I think in some ways they are the most valuable parts of the corporation because they really do want to succeed for it and in the process help each one of these people fulfill themselves, the employees or the teams that they’re working with fulfill themselves.

As I was talking to my wife about this discussion, I was saying, “What in the world do you say? What’s the golden list of 10 things that I learned in 33 years with IBM?” She said, “Well, I don’t know about that,” but she said, “The thing that stuck in my mind was the last month or so that you retired, you invited all of the secretaries that you’d ever had in the West Chester and whatever area to come to a luncheon.”

The thing is when you do staff jobs and other jobs in an area for 15 years and you do each one of the jobs from a year and a half to three years and you have the normal kind of motion as far as organizations and changing and move to a different location or office, I had 15 or 17 secretaries during that period of time that I worked with.

I invited them to a luncheon and I had about 100% attendance at this thing. It was just great because they were just really important people. They were as important as my boss was. They were important as anyone that had worked for me. The whole idea was to try to leave with them appreciating how much I appreciated them.

By the time I looked at the bell curve of my career having peak somewhere and gone into a Dannemois, the thing that became valuable as I was doing these last few jobs was just the whole idea of celebrating and trying to encourage the relationship and to sustain them and then work really hard at the job.

Now as I think about that, inevitably you have these collisions that just time of you which I can bring forward as, “This is what I tried to do. Here’s how it ended up.” In most every case, there was resolution at the end of some sort. There were huge dark valleys that we ended up going through. I mean, not name calling and not people losing jobs and so on and so forth but having employees that worked for you who had basically gone over your head, who were saying things that really misinterpreted what your intent was where you basically had to just continue to work with them.

That’s probably one of the most difficult things to do is when you have what seems to be an irreversible disconnection with an employee and yet you have day-to-day operations and you got to show up each day. Again, it’s not life and death kind of a thing and that’s why you just be the old shortstop or pitcher and pick it up and move forward here.

It is exhausting and there is nothing harder to try to figure out than to how to get back not so much in the good graces but just to a level of understanding with another human being that you really do value them. Just getting back to points of workability with folks. What you’re hoping for are nice retirement lunches with warm smiles from all the secretaries. That’s the high ground but unfortunately, there’s so much more involved than that in the process. It’s a case of how do you fix a disconnection and then how do you maintain a relationship with someone when you from on high have a direct order to carry some things out.

Things are going to go against an employee and you need to execute but in the process indicate that there is a situation where the people is still valued. I guess, that’s where as much as you talk about the fact that I’m just trying to love people and love in a very positive, healthy, encouraging, hoping the best for them, realizing that I need to treat them as someone as more important than myself and so on and so forth.

That’s where the other part of this has to happen when you’re directed to do some things that you’re not necessarily in agreement with is that if you’re doing your best that God is going to work this thing out for them as well as for you because in some cases, you will part as not friends. Sometimes you will part as they’re not being in understanding. That’s where you’ve got to also deal with responsibilities that you have as an employee of where you are. You’re not going to do anything against the law.

If they were asking you to actually go physically hurt someone, you obviously wouldn’t be doing that. Unfortunately, there’s this fairly substantial gray area where you’re required to do some things. You try to love them and help them as much as you can and then when it goes beyond that, you just have to realize that there are priorities beyond this job and they’re still okay and you’re still okay.

I’ll tell you, there’s a very much of a top of mind kind of things that comes out out of being mentored or selecting a mentor which is the triage or the selection process that’s incumbent on you to make in order to have the relationship be a good one. I mean, first of all, anyone that wants to come to help you, the first thought is, “My goodness! I’ll take them all. Just give them numbers and line them up and schedule them,” kind of a thing.

I had a mentor that told me once, he said, “Look, you know, there are cowboys and then there are cowboys with hats and you want to be with the cowboys that have hats.” The point he was making was there are lot of mentors that will talk a good game. You’ll go in to them at different times when you have job changes. You’ll go in for them different times for advice and so on and so forth. They’ll talk up different opportunities and they’ll talk advice and so on and so forth. You will find that nothing comes of it because they don’t choose to vest themselves in it at all.

They don’t want to take any of their own personal … I don’t mean to have any animosity but the problem is a mentor going bad is a very difficult situation because you choose to have faith. You choose to depend. You choose to put a piling down on somebody. If you find and the thing is it’s hard to find other than through experience or what actually happens.

If you find that they really are not willing to put any of their own skin into doing something for you then they’re a cowboy without a hat. As supposed to some people that have a discussion with you that says, “Look, for whatever reason, Joe just doesn’t like you very much. I know that this is hard for you to hear but he doesn’t like you very much. He doesn’t think you have much potential or whatever. Maybe there was something that happened between you guys but that’s okay. We’re going to go here. I’m going to ask or I’m going to do or I’m going to suggest and we’ll see where it goes from there.”

What has that mentor done? That mentor has sacrificed something. When I think of mentors, I’m not so much thinking so much of the Dalai Lama who’s going to drop some pearl on you and from there, everything sorted and you yourself know how to move. I’m thinking of mentors that can both provide some advice and be pulling guards for you in some case to actually make a path, suggest a path and then do some priming for you.

That’s just a huge deal. Like I said before, they sacrifice. They are honest. Some of the best things that come from the best mentors are some of the worst news you’ve ever heard because they’re really honest with you. It manifests itself in some kinds of actions on their part and whether it’s going to work or not, who knows? The point is they have tried. I guess, the priming of it that help it along.

The thing too is the thought that the mentor has some understanding of where you are at the time because I’ve also found that things that I’ve wanted to do in a career at any particular point in time were premature. If a mentor can keep you on the right pace, that’s a good thing too because you got no clue about that. You’ve got your image of yourself. You’ve got what you want to do and you got the environment out there.

I guess that for some people, they made me so strong and so overpowering that they can just leap wherever and they will be sustained. I think generally speaking, you’re looking at a mentor that really does know where you are and have a wisdom to help you with the right timing.

At these various points of recovery that I had in my own career and in my life, I see this coach that didn’t necessarily know me very well but who just decided he would initiate. Mentors by their nature are initiators. This isn’t someone that fell in love with you. This isn’t someone that you spun your charms with. This is someone who by their nature is maybe is a problem solver or sees as opportunistic with people. They’re opportunistic with people.

All of a sudden I realized this coach, senior year, this retired coach that was a biology teacher who I never played for, who I never had a class with, who was a long time baseball coach of this Catholic school in Chicago area said, “I know this coach. I’ll give him a call.” The whole trajectory of my life changed from there because they wanted to initiate something. Were they nurtured as a mentor? I didn’t know what a mentor was back then.

They initiated something at that point. I went back to look for him and unfortunately, he passed away. I sent a note to his kids because the alumni association, a particular high school that he worked at was aware of where some of his family was. They said, “Man, thank you. Thank you for letting us know. He was a great guy. We really miss him.”

Just in terms of somebody that worked behind the scenes, I mean, I think maybe one of the biggest things that you can do is just encourage random acts of mentoring. That might be one of the best things to do as supposed to figure out how to go get yours. Who can you go have some impact on? There’s plenty enough to do and I don’t think of this as who are my three people today or so on and so forth.

I think it definitely does happen. Your question of “Who work behind the scenes without being nurtured to make something happen?” is a real wakeup call. My life would have been very different if that was not the case. The other thing was I had a peer when I moved in one of these marketing jobs who was the pricing manager while I was a marketing manager.

We had a good relationship. We had some exchanges on some things because you want to have some knockdown drag out discussions with folks, with the pricing guys. The pricing guys were like, “You are dealing with cupboard. You are dealing with the precious things in the cupboard, man.” They’ve got this idea that any point in time the doors are going to fly open and everything is going to fly out because of what some sales guy cooked up.

We had some interesting discussions but we always knew where each other stood. He ripped me but I knew that he liked me and we were connected. I had a great deal of respect for him. To make a long story short, probably 20 years later, he’s CFO with a company and I’m told things aren’t working out where I am and I need to move rather quickly on it.

When the things happen, when the ditch appears, you can’t hover over it so much. The thing was this was not so much a mentoring kind of a thing but this was had there not been a priority on relationships as you go through these things, those instantaneous mentoring things do not occur where we have opportunities to nurture one another. I guess in the basest, cheapest way of looking this is, “Is it some kind of fraternity or a club or whatever?”

The point is this is an all-inclusive fraternity and sorority. We all ought to be taking care of one another in terms of randomly, “Are there some things that I can do now?” When you reconnect with someone in the future, is there a sense that you are a respecter of persons and hence, maybe are due some help long after the fact. I think you’ve made me think of some mentoring dynamics that I had never thought about.

What my world view is what my own sense of truth is really drives how I end up being fulfilled. My idea of being fulfilled coming out of college, I mean, I did all right. I had an economics degree. Fulfillment for me was going to be able to play majorly baseball. That was it. The tack I was on was until somebody tells me I’m not good enough, I’m on this path because that’s how it works from eighth grade. I mean, you just keep going until they say, until you don’t get picked first anymore, until somebody else throws a hard or fast ball than yours. I’m just going to keep going. I’m just going to keep going.

I took myself out of baseball. I mean, if you would have told me, before they said, “Your curve ball’s hanging,” or “Your fast ball is not fast enough,” I wasn’t fulfilled in it anymore. I think the fulfillment and maybe this goes a little bit far a field is so much of the fulfillment that’s tied to this worldly achievement stuff either dollars or toys pulled behind the station wagon or whatever ends up being nice for a while.

I mean, it definitely catches your attention for a while. Don’t get me wrong. I had put three kids through college and live in the Northeast to have a job. It’s not a bad thing but whenever the ladder is hard against that wall, it’s not good. It’s going to get slippery after a while. The question then becomes, “What is the fulfillment kind of a thing?” I think what you’re trying to do especially in a business is to get a person to think that they are valued, that they are worthy, that they are appreciated and that that fulfills them.

I mean, it’s scary how much further I would go if you just patted me on the back and told me I was a good guy versus give me a 10% raise. There are people that will sit right across from us and say, “Forget about your pat on the back but I want the 10% and I want it now.” The thing is I think that down deep there is a pilot light in each one of us that needs to be nurtured, needs to be protected.

There was a thing that IBM had that was a direct connection to fulfillment which was one of the three basic beliefs that IBM had that officially I think may have come off the table as we went through the transition of the early ‘90s. It was called respect for the individual. It was three beliefs: pursuit of excellence, customer satisfaction and respect for the individual.

The whole idea was those were not debatable. Those were not negotiable. They were there all the time. This whole idea of respect for the individual, I mean, it got played with and it may be at times became a little bit maudlin. I’ll tell you, if you were falling down the roof or down the mountainside that was the pee time that went in. The whole idea was they respect me as an individual.

The point is to be able to fuel the souls, affirm people in who they are, all the better if they have a great performance either with their staff work or their quota or so on and so forth but to just be sure that you’re affirming them as people as you go through this is a huge deal. It’s a huge deal.

It ends up being a directive from the Judeo-Christian side of things and that’s one thing and that’s an important thing. I think it works in business. I don’t mean to just leverage it into a business situation so that it can generate more earnings per share or whatever. The point is it’s something that’s inviolable. If you don’t nurture a person’s soul and their sense of self while they’re doing what they’re doing, you’re going to be hurting. You’re both going to be hurting.

It’s all wonderful when they also have the business performance but when it doesn’t go a way to try to find a way to still nurture them is really critical. The thing too is they’ll go to the mets for you after that. Everything may not be roses after that but if they know that you appreciate them as a human being, the limits of what they’ll do to go back and get that reaffirmation. They’re almost charging after the reaffirmation more than they’re charging after you. They’ll want to do that. They’ll want to do that.

I’m doing some mentoring. I have been doing some mentoring. I grew up in the city and I have a heart for kids in the city. I was mentoring in Bridgeport, Connecticut which is a burnt out industrial town in the east. It was during the first and second World Wars. They were making ammunitions and they had grand boulevards and a lot of wealth and good things happening.

With the digital age and the services economy and whatever, it has gone in the tank. The level of teen pregnancy and the issues that are going on there are just huge. For the last couple of years, I’ve been working with the … I started three years ago with some seventh and eighth graders and I’m staying with them through sophomore year in high school. Then have worked with another set of junior high kids in that area.

That has been good. That has been very good. I have a heart for that. I’ve also taken stock of having a heart for it and having capabilities for it versus what’s actually been happening with it and where I can spend my time. Now, I’m going to do something different. I’m going to do something a little bit different. I’m going to work with a Christian counseling center that’s trying to expand some of their scope and so on and so forth.

The point is we need to reevaluate where we spend our time and really take stock on how we’re being fulfilled at different times. That’s coming off too maybe too selfishly because the kids in Bridgeport still need the mentoring. What I was realizing was I wasn’t necessarily enjoying it so much. They weren’t necessarily getting that much out of it. The idea is not so much to quit them but disconnect and go work where there’s some more coming out of it, where there’s a better place to work because I don’t think the path that we’re all on is a little bit dynamic.

There’s a sense of reevaluating that. I’m doing that and I’m road biking. I mean, for what it’s worth, it is a way that I can throw myself into something physically and almost feel like I am competing at old levels because a bike is an amazing thing for all the creaky joints and for all of the muscle mass that’s been lost in legs and body and so on and so forth.

You get on a bike and you keep working on it for a while. It’s amazing what you can do with drafting, of course. That has been a great thing. I got my private pilot’s license. It’s something that I always wanted to do. You talk about learning and never-ending learning and license to learn all the time, that’s been a great thing. It didn’t come too easy or cheap. You can solo after 40 hours. I didn’t solo until over 100 hours.

The other thing is who wants to be a bad pilot? You can live for a while being a bad driver but not a bad pilot. That has been an evergreen learning kind of a thing. There’s something about going up against the physics of flying and what’s happening there and the need to have preparation and checklists and planning and to stay ahead of the plane. That’s one thing that you’re always trying to do is you have to be ahead of the plane.

You find with a lot of these different accidents that have occurred if you read about them is pilots get faster planes and they can’t stay ahead of them. Their thinking can’t stay ahead of them. There’s a lot to be said for trying to stay ahead of your life. Setting aside the flying right now is, “Are you doing enough planning to stay ahead of your life?” That’s been an encouragement but something that I really like to do that can keep me fresh.

The other thing is in terms of there’s a lot of things that I believe that I’m doing a gut check and saying, “Why do I believe in those things? Have I questioned it or looked at the base sources of it?” I’m going back and I’m reading John Calvin and I’m reading Martin Luther and I’m reading John Edwards. I’m looking at Augustine. I’ve read Augustine. I’m reading about the Quran.

The point is you go back into the earlier parts of this millennium and the prior one. There were conferences where the religious people came to and they said, “All right. It’s either this way or this way. We’re going that way.” I just have gone that way with everyone else. I’m wondering, “What if they made the wrong decision back then?” I’m not so much trying to excavate and change all of this stuff but I’d like to know why I believe what I believe. I’ve been doing some due diligence on that which has been fun.

My life after work has been this huge effort to try to continue connecting the dots on things and finding what really works. One of them we’ve talked about which is there’s not going to be any dots that I’m going to reconnect that are going to have any change to the conclusion that you have to nurture people and help them fulfill themselves.

It’s not like, “All bets are off. I’m just looking for any other truth.” I think I’m tracking on this stuff. It’s just very encouraging to try to go back and see why I believe what I believe. That’s what I’ve been up to.

I think there’s a big thing is when dreams die because that’s what we all have to be. That’s some fairly hard new to pass on to folks that haven’t had the first dream die on them. You’ve got these dreams and the top expectation coming out of a world view and somebody says, “You can’t go there.”

Like my son, we found that there are only 10 states in the country that have javelin programs in their high school because the insurance rates have gone so high. If you can imagine some javelin practice at a high school with the cross country players and everybody else out there. There are only 10 states who do that but all the major college programs have javelin programs.

Quickly fast forward here, had a guy in our high school who was an all-American javelin thrower, went to Princeton, friend of the family through this one son’s older brother. Comes under his wings, starts throwing the javelin, wins the conference javelin meet, all northeast in the javelin, goes and talks to Stanford and Duke and he gets into Duke.

Goes to Duke. He’s the javelin thrower for Duke. First throw of the first meet blows his elbow out. The dream is ended. It’s over. It’s done. The same head, the trainer, the head doctor that has all the trainers under him that deals with coach case, players and so on and so forth comes up to peer and says, “You know, it’s been nice but you’re not doing this anymore.” First meet, first throw, need Tommy John surgery and so on and so forth.

That was a real kind of a thing. There was discussion with him beforehand as, “You know, you need to guard yourself for the death of dreams.” They just happen and I guess the good news after the first on goes that you at least know that things go bump in the night. The thing was he had some of these anchors that we’re talking about before. Love God and love people.

This was really disappointing. It was very hard on him but he could find ways to fulfill himself in other ways. He can find ways to fulfill himself in other ways. That’s a real example of a death of a dream and I’m trying to drag it back into IBM.

### Everybody except the chairman of the company has dreams die, right? I heard it quoted as, “The nonscheduled non-return to the field.” You go into that staff job and they say, “No more. You’re tapped out. That low pressure area that’s been hanging over you for the last 15 years isn’t there anymore.” How are you going to fulfill yourself? It’s not one of those things where everyone is [Maastopuku](https://www.google.com.ph/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=8&ved=0CDMQFjAH&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffi.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FMaastopuku&ei=ciApVIDaAdLeoASnwIC4Aw&usg=AFQjCNE5iJoP_gmcRc4Q4yoNDqaC4sovsQ&sig2=TZb8d-oDmKuur8D-4VHjFg" \t "_blank). You find another way. You find another way.

### It’s a very bitter pill and I think that I guess, one of the things that you do which I don’t have a track to suggest as to how to do it is as much as we’ve talked about fulfilling other people, trying to work to fulfill them, you then need to determine and have a plan to fulfill yourself. Then not from a selfish standpoint but what are you going to fulfill yourself up with because whatever you had filled yourself up with that you are pursuing has now gone into mass deflation mode.

### Maybe one of the things is you need to be filling yourself up with something that’s not going to be deflated. To encourage managers, children, colleagues to be pursuing the right treasures is really an important thing. If your treasure is that business, if your treasure is the chairmanship, if your treasure is I want to run a line organization with more than 1,000 people in it, I don’t think that’s a bad objective. I think you got to be really careful of it having being your first objective or your only objective. Dreams.

### Just from a destiny standpoint because I find myself often reflecting on this and you might appreciate it given your background. I’m always amazed in retrospect how certain people have actually been prepared unknowingly to be able to do certain things. The one that has often kept coming back to me is Dwight Eisenhower especially in his biographies.

### When you look at what his career was like and when you look at how much he wanted to get into the fight in World War I. He finally shipped off as a captain and got to France and war was over. So he was disappointed but it’s good the war was over. He came back home and a lot of things happened but he was within I think weeks or months of basically being taken off the list of being able to become a General Officer but that didn’t happen.

### Became a General Officer and then the assignments that he had were to go around all the training camps and clean them up. Who wanted that job? So he did that but he did a good job of it. Then he goes and he works for MacArthur. MacArthur doesn’t think he’s anything but a bookkeeper. He’s just organizing all these things and he knows how to organize and he knows how to work with different countries and so on and so forth.

### Then fast forward on running the Allied Expeditionary Force, the Chief Commander. All these different things that look like failure, that look like the wrong things that looks like he was misplaced. Poor Dwight. Puts him in a position to be successful and defend Western Civilization. So he won that war. If anybody has read anything about … The Germans could have easily won that, not to mention other things that could have gone other ways.

### I’m a great believer in providence. I think each one of us if we’re diligent and if we’re thoughtful about what we consider as priorities, if we’re patient, if there’s one gift to nurture, it would be patience. If he got impatient any number of times, no commander, no president, how else would things have flowed? There are a lot of other stories like that. There’s lot of other stories like that.

### One of the other things that I’ve been doing, this is one of the biggest things of my life here where I’m glad we’re talking about this. I had a friend, a good IBM friend and personal friend who died back in 1991. He left IBM, moved to Chicago, was at the pool with his family on the fourth of July. Went into the locker room to change because they were going off to a picnic and never came out. So he died and three young kids.

### I went to his funeral. His wife had his journal and I read his journal entry on July 3rd, the day before he died. I kept it. I mean, it was very meaningful. Then I started to become aware not because I was looking for him but just because I’m around and we’re a more recording prone civilization. All the other last words that came out of like Rick Husband, the commander of the space shuttle. What’s his last words? David Bloom who was an embedded reporter in Iran during the war who had a pulmonary embolism and his last e-mail that went back to his folks.

### Cassie Bernall who was one of the girls at Columbine who one of the perpetuators asked if she believes in God. She was under a library table in their library and she answers she did and she was killed. Her diary the day before and so on and so forth. There’s a condition in people’s hearts that talk about where their hopes are and where their dreams are that revealed themselves before they depart on the boundaries.

### I’m big on boundaries, on edges of things that’s why I like to fly. I think that’s why people like to surf. I think that’s why people climb mountains. I think it’s why they sail. It’s just on the boundary of things. There’s really a sense of providence because as these people are … As the last bits of communicative life come out of them, a lot of these people have said the same things and recognize the same providence that’s active.

### It’s a fascinating kind of a thing that their hearts are basically breaking for the same things that God’s heart breaks about. When you get there, you’re home and these people were taken home or happen to go home. So that’s where their hearts are.