

53rd Storyworth: What Famous or Important People Have You Encountered?

First, it should be clearly stated that I do not follow celebrity, especially as most of them are famous just for being famous, and little more. I prefer people of substance. That is not to suggest that some of those same people have NO qualification based on actual merit, but rather to note that society seems to confer fame and wealth on some pretty flimsy criteria.

Probably the sole exceptions would be people about whose lives I have some awareness because they have actually accomplished something. Whatever one feels about ultra-rich people like Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk, it must be acknowledged that they have managed to affect the world for the most part in ways we can agree are progressive, even if the jury might be out on their relative “positiveness”. And while I have not actually met any of them, I can easily admit that MY impact has been far less, however much pride I take in my own accomplishments, which I do.

One characteristic of those people is their ability to understand and take a “calculated risk”, even as they sought to change the paradigm of their particular interest substantially. And while I can easily think of ways in which each of their “accomplishments” has been a double edged sword, it should NEVER be interpreted that their extreme wealth has been a fluke. Even if they might have started with a silver spoon, the world is very different for their having existed, and it can readily be observed that it would have been entirely unlikely to look as it does without them.

Many’s the time I wanted to wring the neck of Bill Gates as the symbol of Micro\$oft, because their software policies meant continuous changes to already settled ways of doing things, which to my mind added almost nothing of value for ME, but forced me to completely re-learn the means of using their tools, which I see as a completely and utterly avoidable added cost. A perfect example is their decision to phase out XP in favor of increasingly complex systems demanding more hardware, as they progressed through Windows 7 thru now 11. That decision, at the very least, meant that I could not file my taxes using TurboTax four years ago unless I was willing to put all my personal financial info on the internet, or acquire a Windows 10 OS computer, neither of which was an acceptable solution to me.

That coincided with Intuit’s decision to offer a “free” online filing, but to make that ONLY for those whose taxes involved nothing except being someone’s indentured servant as a W-2 employee. With EXACTLY the same bottom-line result as they advertised as qualifying for that filing method, but acceptance of the risk to my personal wealth which comes from owning a business, to say nothing of the immediate exclusion of any possibility of benefit from unemployment and the like were I to ALSO have W-2 income, Intuit expected me to either pay them their \$80 for the same package I could buy retail at Wallyworld for \$46, or to lie to the IRS about the reality of my financial life in order to save that needless expense. So there is at least collusion if not outright fraud with intent there. Yet I COULD file with XP if I do so online. See why I am angry?

But back to the subject as shown in the header – who have I actually encountered? None of the above. Let me be also clear who I consider to be important, and celebrity is almost entirely the opposite. The person unloading a shipping container, the one transporting goods across country as a long-haul driver, and the local delivery person or the one who stocks the shelves – those are my important people. With COVID, almost any healthcare worker would fit that bill as well, but especially those who made the effort to educate us instead of merely confuse us with misinformation. I have NO PATIENCE for anti-vaxxers and the like who seem to sprout all over the media with unsubstantiated and anecdotal claims which have no statistical support whatsoever.

There are, however, a few people with global impact I have actually met. Because of my activity with the Porsche Club of America (PCA) I have had the pleasure of meeting a number of the children of the man most responsible for the cars I love, who himself demurred to be the son of the man who started the Engineering firm with his name, Ferdinand Porsche. I am sorry to say I never actually met his son Ferry, although I am sure we would have been fast friends, because he took what was a very small group and made it a global company which produced some of the finest automotive technologies over the past 70+ years. But I have met his sons, Wolfgang and Hans-Peter, who have taken up the family mantle in supporting the club, something of an oddity in these days of Corporate control, especially since VW took ownership of Porsche AG.

Wolfgang is, like me, a production specialist. He is also, unlike me, a PhD in Engineering, which in Germany at least is an exalted title. Hans-Peter has been in many ways the Porsche family's representative for the club, and has participated in many of its "Parades", which are its annual conventions held in a different place each year. My last contact with him was at the 2004 Parade in "Foat Wuth" where I performed as "Willie Nosong" at the request of the organizers, as well as participating in the musical entertainment for the "Goodie Store". Peter played right along with a skit at the final banquet held at the "Stockyards" and dressed as a campy cowboy to play along with the crowd, so he knows how to laugh at himself, which I respect ;-)

I have also met both of their families, who have joined them at Parades. And what I found best about all was their absolute normality. Were you to meet any of them on the street you would be unlikely to even notice them, as they do not put on airs nor exude any of the exclusivity which you might have expected from their not inconsiderable wealth. And each has certainly made themselves known internationally for work related to the company, and the furtherance of the family reputation. Contrast that with some other "celebrity families" and you will see why that matters to someone like me who values substance over style.

Beyond them, I cannot say that I might not recognize one or another person from the entertainment industry were I to pass them on the street, but I would be unlikely to do more than nod a friendly "hello" and continue on my way, reasoning that they, too, deserve unencumbered lives despite their career investments in "celebrity".

However, the people I would most enjoy "sharing a beer with" would be people like myself who are merely trying to maintain sanity in this world which seems so lacking in that simple trait. Those with the most appeal have a sense of humor which, like mine, responds to the absurd. Some of us actually go seeking it ;-)

I am personally heartened to see the amount my own daughter is becoming a "celebrity" of sorts, since she has provided a media source for information during this period of Covid, which continues unabated, and she has been a very useful fount of knowledge for myself and my loved ones who seek to minimize the negative impact therefrom. As a PhD herself, Jess has frequently provided awareness so we could remain as safe as possible in this VERY unsure time, especially surrounded as we are by people with political agendas which strike me as self-destructive. But somehow THOSE people are the ones getting the media attention, despite the real threat to all our existence they represent.

And I DEEPLY resent those who seem to slather worship on DJTrump, a person who continues to demonstrate a self-centeredness which I find offensive, and a GOP which seems to be willing to forego all its historical principles in favor of remaining in power despite obvious changes in demographics, and who demonstrate an absolute unwillingness to accept ANY responsibility for actual governance, despite currently holding an almost perfect half of the authority, which therefore makes those who DO seek to accomplish something useful for the populace seem powerless to do so. And why I want NO PART of ANY of them, let alone their acquaintance, as I consider them to be neither important nor worthy of encountering. ;-)

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