

54th Storyworth: What Are Some Of Your Childhood Accomplishments?

Before I went to college, I accomplished a few things, none of which were earth shattering, but all led me to what I eventually became; as a career, a parent, a sibling and a citizen. None of these should be envisioned as “blowing my own horn”, but rather to show why they were somewhat essential to the totality which became “Me”, both for better and for worse. I always had a creative bent, and was never afraid of hard work. I did, however, refuse to suffer fools gladly or maintain inefficiencies once I saw better methodology.

Probably notable for most people would be the fact that I was awarded a plaque for assuring the safety of my younger siblings when, at about age 13, my brother and his friends had been playing with matches in the upstairs back room and managed to ignite the papers in a box there. Which, of course, led to a considerable blaze. But before that there had been smoke, and at the first sign of that I called the fire department and then made sure my younger sibs were all accounted for outside the house so the firemen could deal with it. Thankfully, there were no injuries, and the town made far more of a deal about it than I had expected.

I have noted in some earlier postings how I earned money and set some records selling things like Boy Scout Candy and Magazines for the High School. I was fortunate to have received my Father’s ability to both let the disappointment at rejection slide off like water from a duck’s back, and the commitment to finding the best methods to sell the most by the procedures I would apply. I rapidly learned that the first guy to the door, especially with goods in hand, would make the sale, if presentable and good humored. So I was always cheerful, but I made sure to get the candy I knew I could sell most readily, and get the supply so it was with me, while most others would take orders then have to go collect at delivery, which obviously required two trips at least, and I figured it lost others at least 20% of potential sales, too ;-)

By paying upfront for the candy, I had boxes of the stuff to wheel around. It always helped that I was NOT a commercial activity like the store down the street, which would have met with far more resistance I am sure. Oddly, I never wanted to get involved in selling as a profession, probably because I had seen the long hours my Dad had to put in with his Fuller Brush inventory management. But I certainly applied many of those same skills when it came time to become an independent consultant, and they always helped there because I rarely had actual leverage over people, like control of their wages, so needed soft skills to motivate. As I mentioned earlier, the simple act of bringing donuts for floor personnel provided disproportionate loyalty points ;-)

I had good mechanical skills, too. My Mom would tell anyone who would listen how I would disassemble things like appliances even before I had any idea how to reassemble them. But by age five I was starting to get them back together correctly, and from at least age eight, I was the primary “go-to-guy” for first refusal on repairs which were actually needed. That continues to this very day, and the fact that the originator of some of these things left no expectation of repair has NEVER been an impediment to my extending its useful life ;-)

I also devoured owner and service manuals like many people read dime store novels. I still do, although few of them today are physical “page turners” since most are downloaded PDFs from the internet. That gives them the added advantage of allowing me to print pages if I want some documentation I can get messy while I am working on it, as well as saving copies to each and every server I own so I have zero chance of never having them available once they are no longer available online. And since my “techie bent” is to learn whatever I can about things even if they were never intended to work as I want them, which is far more often than you might imagine, I often have added pages of self-produced documentation. Of course, when I was a child no internet availability existed, so lots of the things I used to have documented are simply not in existence anymore, but neither is my childhood, except as I earlier observed I am going through my first childhood still ;-)

A recent example is illustrative. I have a LAN, which is a Local Area Network, and it is configured to work identically at each of my Chittenango and Inverness addresses. That means I can move my computers, printers, etc between the locations, and they will work seamlessly. I have never seen it described to do things that way, but it makes perfect sense to me. The key concern is security, but that's why I severely limit external access. I NEVER allow "Tech Support" to have my login credentials nor provide them what is marketing value which I have actually paid for in buying their products; the utilization tracking reports. I first learned all this while I worked with TRW, and have made good use since.

Anyway, over time my LAN addressable servers (what are called NAS, or Net Addressable Storage) have become more complex and costly because everybody wants to allow users to access their data from anywhere on the planet. Only problem is that leaves them open to hacking, which is rampant, because criminals are very creative. I would rather carry the devices with me and simplify my life. But as each server has crashed, one fewer redundancy has existed, and because I use a mixed variety of "user" technologies, from XP to Win10 to Android and iOS devices, all of which need the same access on my LANs, it gets complex. And replacing them has become nightmarish, not least because Micro\$oft keeps changing basic setups and obsoleting hardware I am currently continuing to use. So after getting to my last two servers because I cannot seem to actually share USB hard drives to the LAN (I promise I am working on it right now ;-)) and the price of ANYTHING with an actual Ethernet connection keeps rising because those standards have to update, MY DATA, which is the actual value in the equation, is put at risk. So you will forgive my enthusiasm for finding how to make the newest version WD MyCloud 3TB drives work over the past three days, which I JUST accomplished.

But back to my childhood. As I noted in earlier writeups, my parents gave me no allowance from about age ten because I had established a year-round earning ability doing yard care; mowing and snow clearing typically. And like any good business person, I sought improved efficiencies as I could afford them, so I progressed from shovel to plow to snowblower over a very few years. That also helped me when it came time to select my own home equipment when Lynne and I moved to Liverpool and happened to pick JUST the worst location on a cul-de-sac, where the wet slushy snow would be pushed from the circle by the plows EVERY snowstorm. A 16 HP Snapper two stage snowblower and mower deck garden tractor did the job, albeit is terrible with winds blowing back at my face, which was just about normal because of the orientation of the house and driveway ;-))

But that business also taught me the value of money and effort, and how to minimize the waste of either. Sadly, kids today seem to have no interest in such pursuits, or else their parents so fear for their safety as to make the availability of such kids, especially now that I am frail enough to need them myself, pretty scarce. And also unfortunately, such lack of resources cuts across almost EVERY thing kids used to learn economics from.

So in summary; the things I accomplished as a child were to learn to be an adult – to take responsibility and ownership of my own success or failure, and base that on my own effort and ingenuity. And that included paying attention to politics so I would not become like the GOP sheep following their despicable DJT, and reject blatant inconsistencies between what they said and what they did, and the "tit-for-tat" game which has perpetuated control by a vocal minority of the vast majority through manipulative BS. All too few people seem to have gotten the lessons, however, and our "Throw-Away Economy" is one sad result. ;-))

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