

# Balance

*The Business–Life Connection*

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James A. Cusumano, PhD

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FOR INEZ

*My wife, my lover, my best friend,  
and the inspiration for this book*



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## FOREWORD

*During your life, you will have many acquaintances,  
but true friends you will count on one hand.<sup>1</sup>*

—CHARLES A. CUSUMANO, SR.

BEFORE PUBLISHING MY BOOK *Letters to a Young Entrepreneur*, I asked Jim to review the manuscript and give me his input and critique. Of the many comments that I included in the final version of my manuscript, one stands out as defining Jim so well. It was in relation to my chapter “Companions in the Journey,” where I emphasize the importance of deep trust in effective and successful business collaborations like the one he and I enjoyed over three decades of building companies together. He said: “To be honest, I sometimes fought with my ego throughout our decades together. However, in my moments of truth, I always knew that you were more important to me than the insecurities teasing my ego and certainly that our bigger vision for Catalytica was really what mattered.” These words epitomize Jim and characterize the wisdom that he shares with us here.

In these pages you will gain an understanding of the pivotal personal characteristics that make for good leadership and the so important recognition that we are one and the same person in our private lives and in the conduct of our business affairs. His lessons are so consistent with what I most admire about Jim and his life story:

### ***He embodies passion.***

As Jim points out repeatedly in this book, *passion* is a key element of happiness and success. Certainly he has embodied this in everything that he has undertaken, and it seems to give him boundless energy. I still remember how in spite of a skiing accident, cast and all, he proceeded to board a plane to join me in one of our early but key negotiations. The overarching mission we were on was all that mattered, regardless of discomfort or inconvenience.

### ***He exudes enthusiasm.***

Whatever he is undertaking, Jim does with excitement. It is hard to resist his “wake,” and as a result it is easy for others to follow him and join in the

journey. This is very much the mark of good leadership. Often, when several of us would see problems in tasks, his attitude that nothing is impossible usually won the day.

***He listens.***

In spite of his enthusiasm, Jim was never oblivious to the concerns of others. The reason he and I became such an effective duo was because there was such deep respect between us that even if we heard contrary ideas or approaches to our own, we internalized the other's perspective. So much of life is this give and take, this dance, enriching the outcome and the joy of the journey.

***He inspires by doing, not by talking about it.***

Jim is all life at all times. He plunges in fully. Even when we were addressing very specific business issues, they became a full part of him, not just a part to be tackled from 9 to 5. He dedicated his full attention to what he was engaged in and time was subsumed to the task at hand.

It is not surprising that the messages that permeate this special book embody these characteristics. They are presented in a very personal way, drawing on specifics from Jim's many endeavors, and creating an underlying message that a fulfilling life and a successful business go hand in hand and draw on the same fundamental personal traits and drivers. They rely on each of us finding our innate talents, and through that process discover our purpose in life and follow it faithfully. Honesty with ourselves is then reflected in our honesty with others, a key hallmark of good leadership—what Jim calls *Inspired and Conscious Leadership*.

Jim has done a great service by collecting these important reflections of a full life that has spanned many diverse careers and endeavors, and distilling them into *Balance*. The lessons he draws upon apply to all of us, regardless of our chosen profession or avocation. They contain fundamental concepts that can increase our happiness and our effectiveness, and simultaneously help make this a better world.

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## PREFACE

*And when you want something all the universe conspires  
in helping you to achieve it.<sup>2</sup>*

—PAULO COELHO

I HAVE HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE, or karma, to find a number of special opportunities along my life's journey. These opportunities always occurred at critical crossroads or turning points. I could have gone "left" or "right." I made choices, but the final outcome was not obvious at these decision points and often did not unfold until many years later. How do you make these challenging decisions with limited information?

I propose that there is always an "omen," usually an incisive occurrence that suggests the direction you should take, or perhaps a wise person who knows which path is best for you to create meaning and fulfillment in your life. Meaning and fulfillment encompass not only your business career, but also extend to your personal life as well. In fact, it is a continuous bridge of balance between these two important sectors of your life that is the source of long-term fulfillment and happiness.

As you will see in reading further, I am in the midst of my "Fifth Professional Life," having progressed from a 1960s' rock star with the Royal Teens in my youth to a scientist and a corporate research executive with Exxon; then to cofounder and chairman of a Silicon-Valley-based public company, Catalytica, Inc.; next to becoming the founder, CEO, and executive producer of Chateau Wally Films, a feature film company; and currently—but hopefully not finally—with my wife and business partner, Inez, to becoming the renovator and owner of Chateau Mcely, an internationally recognized castle hotel and spa, located just outside Prague in the Czech Republic.

I made some mistakes along the way, but learned a few things as well: most ostensibly how to see or uncover the "omens" at critical decision points and how to pursue these interests with the balance necessary to find meaning, fulfillment, and success in both my personal and business lives.

As a consequence, I have often been encouraged to share my thoughts about the fruits of my journey with the idea that others might find value in my experience and perspective. I offer you here my learnings and my discoveries.

My overarching goal in writing this book is to provide a means to help you find or enhance your fundamental purpose and passion, and in doing so to create a more meaningful and fulfilling life. While I have dealt extensively with my thoughts and experience in creating both a successful personal and professional life, I have particularly emphasized the latter. However, I have found that to create long-lasting fulfillment and happiness, it is absolutely necessary to pay diligent attention to both parts of your life in order to create the necessary balance.

If you take your valuable time to read this book, you deserve to know something about my personal and professional experience and the credibility of my recommendations. I wrote “Part I: My Story” because I would like you to have a sense of my source, my inner core, my “essence” as events unfolded throughout my personal and professional lives and led to my thinking and conclusions.

The central message I want to share with you is this: in the big picture, life is short, no matter how long you live. Yet I firmly believe that all of us were meant to live our lives to their fullest and most of us want to do so. You are likely among a large fraction of humanity that has evolved to a state of consciousness which enables you to make important contributions to the physical and consciousness evolution of our universe. That’s why you are here, and there is no greater personal satisfaction on this planet than to being in the thick of doing so. If you are not yet on a path that takes you in that direction, please don’t lose the opportunity. The reward will be beyond your greatest expectations.

I believe you came into this world with a specific set of skills that allows you to make unique contributions, both socially and professionally. I call this your personal “Essence;” ancient alchemists called it your “Quintessence,” the Fifth Element beyond Earth, Fire, Water, and Air, also referred to as the *Aether* that links everything in the universe. These skills differentiate you from other people in your social and professional circles. You intimately sensed these capabilities when you were somewhere between the ages of five and fifteen. You didn’t think in these terms but, believe me, you felt more than a tug in a direction that told you something fundamental about the direction of your life course and how you could contribute to the universe and its continued evolution. When people follow this path, they find their life purpose, generating high levels of physical and emotional energy to fuel their innate passion to create a better world. By balancing these powerful new-found forces within our personal and

professional lives, the natural by-product during this journey is ALWAYS long-lasting abundance and personal fulfillment. Could there possibly be a better course of action?

But too often through unfortunate circumstances, such as ineffective and misleading advice concerning our life's journey from someone who may have meant well, or perhaps from some other source of modern day social hypnosis, we are steered in a direction that does not draw heavily on our fundamental Essence. As a consequence, we find we are not yet on the path of our Life Purpose. Have no fear. Even if your unique capabilities have been submerged over the years by other preoccupations, you can recapture them. This has been accomplished by many people. And it doesn't matter at what stage in your life you are in; it's never too late to find your way and be where you were meant to be.

The late multibillionaire Ray Kroc, the son of modest Czech immigrants, grew up in Chicago and tried all kinds of jobs, including jazz band pianist, waiter, and traveling salesman, among many others. Ray was fifty-two years old when he finally discovered his life purpose and founded the global McDonald's franchise. Harland "Colonel" Sanders was sixty-five when he launched the global Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise. Don't waste your time trying to live another person's dream—no matter whose dream it is—it can't be done. That course almost always leads to disappointment and an also-ran life.

If you don't remember what your fundamental Essence is, I will show you how to rediscover it. If you are patient, you will see the process does not take long. All it requires is commitment and a modest level of tenacity. Once you are clear as to what your Essence is, you can use that skill set to find the proper place or profession for you in this world—something that calls to your very soul—whether it is to be a loving mother and/or housewife, a carpenter, or an inspirational CEO of a large enterprise, or perhaps founder and leader of your own adventure. This is the true path to long-term happiness, abundance, and fulfillment. I pray that I can provide you with the means to find and follow that path. At a minimum, my hope is that for each chapter you read, you get at least one solid idea of value, something you can hang on to that will make a positive difference in your life.

I am truly confident that when you know intimately and unquestionably your purpose in life, you will connect that purpose to a need in this deeply challenged world to make it a better place in which to live. This will generate an intense personal passion. And that passion will ignite immense physical

and emotional energy to enable you to deal with uncertainty which is the source of incredible creativity. When all is certain or completely known, there is no room for creativity. And the converse is true; the greater the uncertainty, the greater the level of potential for creativity. Your creativity will blossom into successful innovation, whether it is expressed directly in your own life or in the lives of others.

Perhaps this path will take you to a large company, or result in your founding a venture of your own. You will discover that the creativity-innovation process is always rewarding and provides a deep sense of gratitude; and ***gratitude always leads to long-term fulfillment and happiness***. The greater your sense of gratitude, the greater your level of happiness. That's the way our universe works.

One final note: I have worked diligently to be pragmatic and specific in my discussions throughout this book. However, at another level you may recognize a more ephemeral message. We live in deeply challenging times. As a result, there are increasing numbers of people around the world who believe that there is a more fundamental and timely need for purpose, passion, and innovation involving all levels of the human spirit. These visionaries—scientists, philosophers, spiritualists and others—maintain that humanity is on the cusp of a quantum shift to a new paradigm. This new way of being honors our interconnectedness and recognizes the unsurpassed power, potential, and creativity that this connection brings to individuals and to the “whole.” This book provides a roadmap for those who embrace this change and seek to facilitate this transition and the promise of a better future for all.

I wish you great success. If but one person reads this book and as a result is helped to find long-term happiness, I will share in that happiness. That's just the way it is; we're all connected. If you find this book of value, please tell your friends or, better yet, loan them the book. And if you care to do so, I would also be most appreciative if you were to share with me your thoughts as well.

—JAMES A. CUSUMANO

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A LIFE OF BALANCE, PASSION, AND FULFILLMENT is *never* lived alone, and it's never due to the genius of a single person. Many people believe that Albert Einstein worked in total solitude while developing his General Theory of Relativity. Not so. If you were to see a list of all of the brilliant scientists he consulted with his thought experiments and mathematics during his efforts on relativity, you would be amazed at the extent of the list and the contributions by others. And so it has been throughout my much humbler life. Therefore, I would like to recognize the geniuses and giants in my life who helped me find balance, passion, and fulfillment, and as a consequence to be able to share with you what I have learned.

I am deeply and sincerely grateful to Ricardo Levy, my dearest friend and business partner for more than three decades, and one of the most important “giants” in my life. Ricardo, author of the very incisive, *Letters to a Young Entrepreneur*, meticulously performed the first edit of my manuscript and put it in much more interesting and readable form. As my “second memory” he checked me on dates, facts, and figures concerning the myriad of experiences we lived through together as entrepreneurs. I also thank Nancy Sugihara, my editor at SelectBooks, who tirelessly and constructively helped me to develop the final manuscript into a cogent product. Her patience with my questions, comments, and strange grammatical constructs is most commendable. However, if there are any errors of substance they are all mine.

Sincere appreciation goes to my good friend, Rinaldo Brutoco, founder, president and CEO of the World Business Academy in Santa Barbara, California. Rinaldo showed great interest and support for what I had to say, and introduced me to Bill Gladstone, my talented, experienced, and most effective literary agent, and a successful author in his own right. Bill also helped me in challenging, understanding, extending, and distilling my ideas by introducing me to some of the talented authors and thinkers he represents, including the genius of Ervin Laszlo and Ruben Papian.

As expressed in chapter 1, my exciting journey would never have happened were it not for a number of “giants” in my life. In particular, there were ten who either created or identified critical forks or turning points in my life path,

and helped me choose the right way to proceed. Not an easy task! I pay special homage to the first two of these “giants,” my mother, Carmela, and my father, Charles, who were respectively responsible for inspiring my “lives” in entertainment and science.

I want to recognize my nine brothers and sisters—Maria Teresa, Charles Anthony, Salvatore Joseph, Camille Jeanne, Grace Cecilia, Lisa Ann, Thomas Edward, Tina Marie, and Donna Gina. As a family, we were always one and there for each other; that’s the way of La Famiglia Siciliana. However, growing up together and to this very day, we have often disagreed and sometimes even vehemently argued our personal beliefs concerning matters pertinent to a life of fulfillment and happiness. Just be a “fly on the wall” for an hour or so at one of our holiday dinners and get-togethers—Mamma Mia, what a debate! However, this creative tension has been a source of introspective learning for me and for that, I am deeply grateful to each of them.

In the entertainment field, it was Bob Baran and the late Buff Decker, two excellent New Jersey born-and-bred guitarists who launched me into an incredible multi-decade magical foray in rock and roll music. And what a blast that was!

I was introduced to the magic, intricacies, and challenges of moviemaking by my incredibly creative and talented deceased wife, Jane Cusumano. As writer and director, Jane was the prime driving force behind our feature film, *What Matters Most*. For production and distribution of the film, Sherry Lansing, then CEO of Paramount Pictures, provided guidance and counsel that helped me immensely in my role as Executive Producer. As busy as she was, she found time to point me in the right direction to develop an effective strategy to commercialize the film. Two talented women, two “giants” in my journey.

My serious commercial adventures in science and technology began with a PhD in physical chemistry under the inspirational guidance of the late Professor M. J. D. Low at Rutgers University, and were subsequently guided by the mastery of “Three Wise Magi”—Ricardo Levy, the late Michel Boudart, and the late John H. Sinfelt. In addition to Ricardo, Michel was also my business partner and an internationally recognized professor of chemistry and chemical engineering at Stanford University. John was a Senior Scientist at Exxon, where during my tenure with that company, he counseled me on how to be most effective at industrial research and successfully commercialize the fruits of my efforts. This knowledge paid off handsomely in guiding the growth of Catalytica, the company Ricardo, Michel, and I founded. Hopefully, within the pages of this book I have done justice to John’s critical role.

I would be remiss without mentioning my appreciation and admiration for the work of Dr. Lance Secretan. Over many years of experimentation and development, Ricardo and I uncovered what might be called today “Conscious



Leadership.” *We thought of it as “Inspired Leadership” because to inspire others, we found that you must first be inspired yourself.* It was a powerful lever for our professional and personal successes. Years later, I discovered Lance’s work on Inspirational Leadership®. I have used his articulation of Inspirational Leadership® in parts of this book because it neatly packages what Ricardo and I discovered as Inspired Leadership, and it adds a valuable complement.

I am indebted to the many reviewers who read my manuscript and provided valuable insight, as well as their endorsement.

I want to recognize my three talented daughters, Doreen Nelsen, Polly Cole, and Julia Cusumano for their challenging questions and comments over the years. Their creative ideas sometimes seem to come “out of left field,” but because of that, they are always a source of learning and enlightenment for me and have contributed to the substance of my thoughts on leadership and fulfillment.

Finally, and *most* especially, I express my deep love and sincere gratitude to my wife, Inez, *the “giant”* in my life; she has consistently provided her support and actually suggested the means to get this book written. Inez has demonstrated time and again that genius, creativity, internal and external beauty, humility, and a deep concern for the “whole” are beautiful and powerful virtues, and it truly is possible for them all to reside simultaneously and comfortably within the soul of a single individual.

There were so many others along the way, too many to mention here, who gave generously of their time, support, recognition, and nurturing. More than ever, I’m deeply convinced that no one does anything of true significance in this world, alone. Sir Isaac Newton got it right—success is achieved easier from the “shoulders of giants.”

Yes, Virginia, we are all connected!



*The Road Not Taken*

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I marked the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost  
*Mountain Interval*, 1916



PART I

# My Story

---



# ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

*If I have seen further, it is by standing on the  
shoulders of giants.*<sup>3</sup>

—SIR ISAAC NEWTON

## KEY CONCEPTS

- ◆ Everyone encounters a number of critical crossroads in their life—distinct possible paths—each with a formidably different outcome.
- ◆ Prior to each of these decision points, you will meet a guide: a learned, emotionally-skilled “giant” who is there to help you decide the right path to take. They are *always* there, but not *always* easy to recognize. You must listen carefully!
- ◆ By carefully listening to understand—not just to hear—the message from these “giants,” you can make the right choice and play out your destiny with balance fueled by passion, and resulting in long-term fulfillment and success.
- ◆ It is difficult to identify and benefit from these “giants” if you are completely driven by your ego and forgo the power of your Personal Consciousness.
- ◆ If you connect with “giants” along your life journey, you will eventually recognize the true gift of your existence and purpose in this universe.

I NEVER THOUGHT OF MY LIFE as anything extraordinary until my sixtieth birthday when, over an expensive and memorable bottle of 1982 Chateau Petrus, I took a long and deep retrospective look at my personal and professional lives. Yes, there were some incredible challenges along the way, like giving up near term financial freedom from a career in rock and roll music for what turned out to be an exciting career in science, but began with a job that paid only \$15,000 per year; or more poignantly, losing my wife in the prime of her life to breast cancer. Yet, as I swirled and slowly sipped that glass of rich Bordeaux, and looked past those few black clouds

at the true radiance in my life, I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude. I mentally relived the string of magnificent opportunities the universe had presented to me, and for just a brief moment I thought, “Wow, what luck!”

But it wasn't just luck. This I can assure you. As Louis Pasteur noted over a century ago, “Luck favors the prepared mind.” And my mind was indeed prepared at key junctions. But, like Isaac Newton, I for sure “stood on the shoulders of giants,” people whose intellectual and emotional intelligence helped me make important decisions at key turning points in my life. They were truly “angels” who were there at the right moment to guide my personal and professional success, and they could see my prospective future clearly, more clearly than I could.

There were a number of these “giants” in my life, but there were ten special ones who made important observations and contributions at key crossroads in my journey. Sometimes they even created these important decision points. And of course, as baseball great Yogi Berra was fond of saying, “When you come to a fork in the road, take it!” It made the difficult decision at these junctures easier and clearer than if these guides had not been there for me. It also provided perspective on how to keep my life in balance, namely by not violating those fundamental values that became part of my internal compass, my access to my conscious “true north.” All of us meet these people throughout our life's journey as we reach these crossroads. *The path we take—left or right—determines just how meaningful and fulfilling our life will be. The key is to recognize these “giants,” to listen carefully to **understand**, not just to hear their counsel, and then in a moment of quiet introspective truth to recognize how it all fits together.*

I won't elaborate on all of my critical crossroads. Providing a few will hopefully make the point of how important these junctures can be in your life. These examples also illustrate how my life unfolded quite naturally into five distinct professional adventures.

### **Sicilian-American Life in New Jersey**

As the oldest of ten children—six girls and four boys—one child born approximately every two years, I was constantly, unwittingly, and annoyingly faced with responsibility. “Madonna mia! You're the oldest; you've got to set a good example! Capisce?” my father would say. If I heard it one more time, I thought I would scream!

Until I reached the age of twenty, it seemed like Mom—Carmela Madeleine Cusumano—was perpetually pregnant. Now ninety-one years of



age, and a beautiful woman by any standard, she was and still is a soft but positive and effective force. That's the way it is in most Sicilian families. She is a devout Roman Catholic who attends church more frequently than every Sunday and prays the Rosary daily, not only as a means of personal prayer and meditation, but also to request from the Blessed Mother a list of spiritual favors petitioned to Mom by family, friends, and neighbors. Generally the requests come from people who are at least Catholic in name, but occasionally some dribble in from non-Catholics, and once, even from an atheist! "What the hell, just in case, and after all, it can't hurt," he said! It's reminiscent of Nobel laureate physicist Niels Bohr's response when quizzed about a "good luck" horseshoe hanging over the entry to his summer home, "I'm not superstitious, but, you know, they say it works even if you don't believe!"

It usually happens something like this: "Carmela—oh please—my boy Joey, he's not doing well in school, and he has an important final exam coming up," or "My daughter Maria is having her first baby and she's not feeling well," or "My husband, Mario, is having surgery" or some other special need. She never says no, and somehow she almost always works a miracle. She is without question the "Mother Teresa" of our family, and a premier practitioner of Quantum Cosmic Consciousness,<sup>4</sup> which maintains that all things in the universe are interconnected, and if you learn to access the subtle spiritual power that exists in all of us, you can "touch" anything and anyone and work what appears to others to be a miracle.<sup>5</sup>

My father, Charles Anthony Cusumano, who died in 2004 at the age of eighty-four, was the first "giant" in my life, even though we never really got along well. He was a hard working, World War II disabled veteran, physically and emotionally damaged by hell and havoc from his experiences fighting Japanese soldiers in the jungles of New Guinea. I tried desperately to understand him. "How do you trounce around the jungles of New Guinea, watching your buddies get shot or blown to bits, and doing the same to Japanese soldiers, and ever return to a normal life?" I would say to myself. Unfortunately, I was too young. It didn't help much.

He had a lot of good qualities. He was intelligent, charismatic, generous, loyal, and entertaining. And he loved his wife and children. But for three decades, our family ignored, enabled, and lived with his alcohol addiction until, finally, as a consequence of a severe family upheaval at my brother Tom's wedding and Dad's subsequent self-admission to an addiction center, he beat the ethanol demon for the next two decades until his death. Today,

we would call it post-traumatic stress disorder. But those kinds of illnesses were unknown, or at least not recognized, immediately subsequent to World War II. That was much before the era of our great “Prozac Nation.”

“Charlie,” as he was known to friends and family, was enigmatic and a person of paradoxes. Everyone loved him. Yet a simple event, such as someone inadvertently pushing him in line or cutting him off on the road, could send him into a tirade. All ten of us had varying degrees of a love-resentment relationship with Dad. During his alcoholic years, if you were late coming home he could easily whack you on the back of head, send you to bed without dinner, and then later, when he thought you were asleep, kneel beside your bed asking God and you for forgiveness. Everyone who knew Dad before the war said that he wasn’t the same “Charlie” who set sail for the South Pacific. Like many GIs he suffered from the scars of war, which in his case seem to have been manifested in depression and unresolved anger.

Mom was three months pregnant when Dad left for New Guinea. I was a “honeymoon baby,” conceived out of Sicilian passion, born nine months and two weeks after they were married. Both my maternal and fraternal grandparents prayed daily that I would not be born early—“Who knows what the neighbors would think!” I met my father for the first time when I was nearly three years old. It was not a great start. A few days after his arrival home from New Guinea, he was feeding me Gerber’s baby custard from a jar as I sat playfully in my highchair at the kitchen table. I decided after a few spoonfuls that I didn’t want any more of the gelatinous stuff. “Jimmy, open up,” he commanded in true military style. He had been discharged as a staff sergeant and had all of the attendant mentality of that office. I stared back and forth between his intense eyes and the bottle of custard, keeping my mouth closed as tight as a vice. At the time, I had no idea what he might do. “Jimmy, open up,” he continued with increased intensity. No way, I didn’t want any more. Then, in a flash, he jammed the spoon into the bottle and catapulted the remaining custard into my face. To this day, I’m not crazy about custard.

After Dad’s re-enlistment and post-war military stints in Hollywood, Florida, and Phoenix, Arizona, he transitioned out of the U.S. Army Air Corps—the predecessor of the U.S. Air Force—and we moved back home to 714 Van Buren Avenue in the northern corner of Elizabeth, New Jersey, immediately adjacent to what would eventually become the runways of today’s Newark International Airport. There, we crammed into a small

three-bedroom flat downstairs from my maternal grandparents, Giovanna and Salvatore Catalano, who owned the two-family home.

Mom and Dad had one bedroom; the girls occupied the second one, and the boys the third. I have vivid memories of my brothers Chuck, Sal, and me sleeping in an old queen-size bed. A king size would not fit in the room. When going to sleep, invisible lines of demarcation were drawn between each of us in the bed, and God help you if you crossed the line!

We never lived in a home with more than four small bedrooms, even when there were nearly ten of us running around the house in addition to several friends of each of us, who for some reason liked hanging out at the overcrowded Cusumanos' home. Perhaps it was because my father was entertaining to them, or maybe because my mom was always a good listener to problems—but probably because we had the best Italian food in all of Elizabeth, bar none! Eventually, Mom wrote a cookbook, self-published it, and to this day it is a prized possession to those lucky ones who have a copy.

My grandparents were hard-working, first-generation immigrants from Cammarata, a modest village in Sicily not far from the infamous, wealth-adorned city of Corleone. They owned the home we lived in for the first fourteen years of my life, so the rent was reasonable. However, there was a strong friction between my grandmother and my father. She constantly reminded him that we were too many kids, who made too much noise, and used too much water, electricity, and heating fuel. My dad dreamed of the day he could afford his own home and put some distance between him and my grandmother.

For job security, he took a life-long position in civil service at the U. S. Post Office. But it was to be a deep thorn in his side for his entire professional life. For many decades the Elizabeth post office was run and controlled by the Irish, who were not particularly appreciative of Italians, and especially Sicilians. The Irish “earned their stripes” after immigration to the greater New York area. Italians came next, so they were on a lower rung in the pecking order within the multinational neighborhood in which we lived and worked. Dad had incredibly high native intelligence. He would consistently achieve the highest grade in postal examinations, only to be deeply frustrated and angered when he was unfairly passed over time and again by an O'Brian or a Riley who had a lower grade. His IQ and EQ were both high, but that didn't matter under the prevailing circumstances. He was still one of those “damned dagos,” a “wiry wop,” or a “greasy guinea,”

and a host of other deprecating slang labels we faced in the neighborhood where we lived. As a youngster, I ended up in more fist fights than I care to remember because of this prejudice.

But Dad was very well liked in the Italian community and he was often approached by, shall I say, “Sicilian acquaintances,” who wanted to help him get his just due. He always graciously refused; that just wasn’t his way. The only exception was when he allowed Giuseppe Carlotta, whom we kids called “Uncle Joe,” use our flat and telephone a few nights a week to run his numbers business. That was when things were really tough and we needed the extra income. But Uncle Joe eventually left our place because we had a two-party telephone line, and the other party threatened to turn Mom and Dad in to the police.

After “addition” number four (Salvatore Joseph), Dad began to work part-time jobs at night and on the weekends to make ends meet as night manager at a local supermarket and also tending bar—where he met his alcohol nemesis. With so many children and one modestly-paying job in the family, we were poor by today’s standards. We just didn’t know it, since a number of the folks in the neighborhood were in a similar situation. One occasion out of many paints this picture vividly.

It was the winter of 1952 on an early February morning during a vicious New Jersey snowstorm. Dad did not have the 14 cents—that’s right, 14 cents—necessary to take the Number 30 bus from North Elizabeth where we lived to the Elizabeth Port Post Office where he worked at the time. It was a good five miles by bus. He was too proud to walk upstairs and borrow the money from my grandmother. She would have given it to him, but not before she reminded him that he gave her daughter too many children. So he walked to work that morning and then home in the evening during one of New Jersey’s worst blizzards on record.

I vividly recall watching the 1997 Academy Awards on TV, when Roberto Benigni, the star, screenplay writer, and director of *Life is Beautiful*, won the award for Best Foreign Language Film. Benigni jumped up on the backs of the seats, and to the storming applause of an ecstatic audience made his way to the stage. After a number of sincere and heartfelt comments he turned to the audience, many of them with tears of joy and admiration in their eyes and said, “And I especially want to thank my parents for the gift of poverty!” There is something to Benigni’s comment. Not only does poverty provide a driving force for success, but, by necessity, it motivates you to be flexible, resourceful, and creative in developing solutions to tough problems.

However, let's be clear, there must be a "way out," and it helps immensely to be loved and have emotional support, and to live in a country with broad professional potential. In this respect, a young teenage rebel in terrorist-stricken Somalia does not have nearly the amount of possibilities as a youngster from a poor Sicilian family in a North Elizabeth ghetto.

This was my wellspring; this was my source; this was my early training ground. It set the stage for what would eventually be the unfolding of five professional lives—so far—in the fields of technology and entertainment.

\* \* \*

### **Life No. 1—Rock and Roll Star**

Mom was the "giant" who set me on a path to my first professional career, an entertainer in the rock and roll music business. At age ten, growing up in a large family of very modest means, I needed a job to support my personal habits—baseball picture cards, a fast bicycle, "cool" clothes, and gasoline-powered model airplanes. Also, it was an unwritten rule in our family that by the time we were ten-years-old, each of us had to work part-time. Half of our take went to help the family, and the other half we could keep for ourselves. Dreading the cold New Jersey winters, I wanted an "inside job," so that I could set myself free from my newspaper route and selling fruits and vegetables in the Elizabeth Italian market on weekends.

Listening to Mom play "The Isle of Capri" on an old rickety upright piano she had owned since childhood gave me the idea, which she encouraged, particularly after hearing me play the same tune completely "by ear." I wanted to start a band to play for school dances. That would be so cool! Since Mom was an amateur musician as a youngster, it wasn't difficult to convince her that I needed piano lessons, even though it was a significant financial challenge for our family. But Dad, being the creative charmer that he was, convinced Vince O'Brian, one of his army buddies—yes, he was Irish and a professional band leader—to teach me "the real thing."

I attended one thirty-minute private lesson each week, learning to read and play contemporary music, using a "fake book"—a wonderful invention for working musicians. A fake book contains music for several hundred popular songs. For each song, it displays the right-hand melody line as single notes, and for the left hand, simply states the appropriate chord just above the melody line. The fake book was a godsend for this student-in-a-hurry-with-a-mission, but everything else I learned from Vince, including

swing bass and how to fill in the correct complementary notes for a given chord while playing in octaves with the left and right hands. It was pure magic; I became a working “musician” in less than three years and joined Local 151 Musicians’ Union!

At that point, my close friend and schoolmate Buffy Decker and his cousin Bob Baran, both excellent guitar players, asked me to join their rock band “Little Orbie & The Satellites” as their keyboard player and lead singer, playing proms, weddings, Bar Mitzvahs, smoke-filled saloons, you name it. I loved ’50s’ rock and roll music—especially the four-part harmony songs by many of the successful black groups like the Flamingos, the Moonglows, and the Cleftones. It was my dream to meet them and sing on the same stage.

I soon began writing my own songs, mostly ballads. Living just across from Manhattan, it was easy to take the bus and venture into the City once or twice a month to sell my songs to “Doo Wop” groups, mostly in Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. It didn’t occur to me to copyright my creations, so I simply sold them outright. The return was anywhere from a “buck” to \$15 a song—a lot of money in those days for a teenager.

It helped that I occasionally played musical accompaniment for some local well-known singers such as Rosie Greer from nearby Roselle. Rosie was the famous three-hundred-plus-pound tackle who played for the New York Giants at the time and sang “Moonlight in Vermont” like a meadowlark. The first time he came to our home in Rahway, New Jersey—we finally bought our own home—he could barely fit down the stairs to our basement where I kept my piano. Mom still talks about “That huge giant who nearly broke the stairs to our basement!” Rosie eventually became a preacher and is best known for his counsel to O. J. Simpson during that infamous trial.

I loved the energy of Manhattan and spent quite a bit of time there searching for music opportunities. The late 1950s and early 1960s was a “dry” period for me, and I found it difficult to come up with good salable tunes, probably because I was also focused on doing well in school. But finally I hit upon a tune I really liked a lot. It was called “My One True Love,” and I recorded it as a demo with a fabulous girls group called “The Three Pennies”—two sisters, Pat and Muriel Fox, and their close friend Joanne Esposito. They sang such close three-part harmony that it almost sounded like a single voice.

One Saturday afternoon in early 1961, excited about selling my latest “surely soon-to-be-hit,” I enthusiastically entered the famous 1650 Broadway Building in Manhattan. That and the nearby Brill Building became the

East Coast pinnacle for the birth of great rock and roll music. The songs that came out of those two buildings were an integral part of what became known as the “Brill Sound.” Carole King, Burt Bacharach, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, Phil Spector, Neil Diamond, and many others were all there. In one building, you could write, publish, demo, record, and sell a song. It was a true “one-stop shop.”

After a number of “not interested” rejections, I walked into the office of Leo Rodgers, a well-known record producer, who had a number of successful early rock groups signed under his wing. One in particular, whom I admired immensely, was The Harptones, featuring the incredible lead voice of Willie Winfield. Willie and his group recorded “Sunday Kind of Love,” “My Memories of You,” and the unforgettable, incomparable “Life Is But a Dream.” What great songs, what a magical group! Leo liked “My One True Love,” and asked if I would consider him as my manager. I agreed, and then and there signed my first recording contract, although I had no idea what I was signing at the time. I tried to convince Leo to have the Harptones’ record “My One True Love,” but somehow, to my great disappointment, it never got off the ground, either with them or any of his other groups.

However, some good did come out of my relationship with Leo. With “Dino” as my stage name, I eventually became the lead singer for the Royal Teens of “Short Shorts” fame, who had been managed by Leo. The original group came to him as the Royals, but he renamed them the Royal Teens and established their identity leading up to their recording of “Short Shorts” in 1958. The group had difficulty creating an equally successful second hit, and after many changes in personnel, eventually disbanded. I introduced Leo to the band I was singing with in New Jersey, and after a few changes, we had a solid group re-established as the Royal Teens. We recorded several songs, which either never were released or were short-lived after their release. It was very disheartening. We continued to play nightclubs and colleges on the East Coast and traveled during school holidays and summers. Finally things were about to change—at least, I thought so.

Our group had not had any real visibility since 1962, the year we released “Short Shorts Twist,” a neat sound that played off “Short Shorts” and Chubby Checker’s hit, “The Twist.” When first released, it was on its way to becoming a smash hit in New York City. The infamous disc jockey Alan Freed from WABC and WINS radio in Manhattan, who coined the words “rock and roll” in 1951 while working as a DJ in Cleveland, was a close friend of Leo Rodgers and also of Leo Gray, our booking agent at the William Morris



Agency. Freed played “Short Shorts Twist” like crazy. He loved the tune. Immediately after its release it became the “Hit Record of the Week” on WINS. Everyone was convinced “Short Shorts Twist” would go “Gold.” But our “high” was short-lived since Freed was directed by WINS management to discontinue playing rock and roll music altogether and transition to Frank Sinatra’s recordings and a similar genre. That was a real letdown, as we only needed a couple more weeks of play on WINS to establish the sales momentum we needed for a national hit.

But in time there was a silver lining. Executives at Musicor Records remembered “Short Shorts Twist,” which they liked very much, so they offered us a deal in December of 1969. We signed a recording contract with Musicor to arrange and record an album called *Newies but Oldies* produced by the talented Les Paul, Jr., son of the famous Les Paul, jazz guitarist and inventor of the solid-body electric guitar. The album was a clever idea dreamed up by our co-producers, Bill and Steve Jerome—a compilation of sensational hits of the 1960s done in the style of the 1950s. The concept had never been done before so the producers were nearly neurotic about us not discussing the album with anyone until its release.

In early 1970 “Newies But Oldies” was released with a single from the album, as well. The “A-side” was “Hey Jude” by the Beatles sung to the melody of “In the Still of the Night” by the Five Satins. The “B-Side” was “Smile A Little Smile for Me, Rosemarie,” done like “Little Darling” by the Diamonds. It was a real spoof and great fun to record, and was played heavily by DJs at WABC in Manhattan.

With the “Teens” I traveled and played with many of the great pioneers of rock and roll—Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, Little Richard, Bo Diddley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and just about every Doo Wop group from Dion and the Belmonts to the Flamingos and Harvey and the Moonglows. Although, as with many of the early rock groups of the ’50s and ’60s, we did not receive the financial compensation we should have, it sure beat delivering newspapers and selling fruits and vegetables in the Elizabeth Italian market. And it enabled me to help out at home and buy some of the things I had dreamed about, like a cherry-red 1957 Chevy convertible with all the trimmings. Life was great!

Alan Freed was a key factor in keeping the Royal Teens on the charts. We played for minimal wages at his shows and at “The Camelot,” a popular Manhattan nightclub owned by Roulette Records rock mogul Morris “Mo” Levy. Freed was often the “front man” at the Camelot, so much so that for



the longest time I thought he owned the club. He eventually was the prime target and victim during prosecutions for the 1950s' "payola scandal" involving cash payments or gifts from record companies to disc jockeys, and he was subsequently banished from New York radio. He moved to California and sadly soon after that died at the age of forty-three, a penniless alcoholic.

Fortunately from an early age I had always had a passion for science and technology. As a consequence of this, I studied chemistry and physics, while continuing to play with the Royal Teens. I graduated in 1968 from Rutgers University with a PhD in physical chemistry. While I was an undergraduate at Rutgers, most of my professors allowed me to travel and miss classes as long as I took all of my examinations and kept my grades at a respectable level. Bob Baran, who with my schoolmate Buff Decker, recruited me at age fourteen to play with "Little Orbie and The Satellites," and who eventually played lead guitar and then bass for the Royal Teens, was also a Rutgers student. We were both chemistry majors and became lifelong friends.

During performance intermissions Bob and I would study physics and calculus in the back room of the nightclubs at which we were playing, while the rest of the group ran after girls, always wondering about our priorities in life! We learned to get along on three to four hours of sleep per night, most of it taken in the car ride home; we took turns driving. There was no other choice if we wanted to continue to play with the group and go to school at the same time. I have no idea as to how we managed our lives physically and emotionally. A few points are clear—we were passionate about what we were doing; we ran nearly constantly on adrenalin; and we were young.

There were a couple of times in graduate school when I nearly gave up on science, not because I lost interest, but because the temptation tugging on me was almost irresistible. One instance in particular occurred in 1965 shortly before completing my doctorate. I received a call from Frankie Fame who was in Las Vegas. Frankie was a booking agent whom I knew quite well and who was close with Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, at that time one of the most successful recording groups in America. Bob Gaudio, who wrote most of their music and who was the group's keyboard player, was one of the original Royal Teens and participated in writing "Short Shorts." Frankie said the Four Seasons had lost Nick Massi, their bass player and background singer, and Nick had been immediately but temporarily replaced by a good friend of the Four Seasons, the successful singer, writer, and producer Charlie Callelo. Charlie could not stay with the

group, so Frankie wanted me to audition for the position, which he claimed was essentially a “shoe-in” after speaking with Bob Gaudio.

I spent two difficult days in deep thought before calling Frankie back and telling him that I was incredibly grateful for the opportunity, but I would not pursue it. His long silence on the telephone betrayed his disbelief. The Four Seasons eventually recruited Joey Long (LaBracio), an excellent singer and talented classically-trained musician, who was also from Elizabeth. Much of this episode is portrayed in the current highly successful Broadway play, *Jersey Boys*, which tells the life story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.

I instead chose to go to work for Exxon immediately after graduation as a research scientist, receiving less than 10 percent of the annual starting salary I might have received with the Four Seasons, excluding recording royalties. I never looked back and never regretted the decision. The instant elevation to stardom and the money were most attractive, but it just wasn't my calling. It wasn't my passion, and it would have put my life completely out of balance.

## **Life No. 2—Exxon Scientist in Corporate America**

My father was the first of the “giants” in my technological professional life. He created a critical crossroads for me, and through his support, helped me make what I know in retrospect was not only the right decision, but one of the most important in my life.

It was Christmas 1950 and the streets of Elizabeth were packed with snow. There were no snowplows in our neighborhood. I am sure that the tax rate there was too low to justify the costs, compared with Elmora and Westminster, the swank sections of Elizabeth that received all of the city services they needed. Besides, we didn't have a car at the time, so it really didn't matter to us. We went everywhere by bus, or someone else drove, and more often than not, we just walked. It was nothing for our family to walk five miles to visit someone. So, as usual, we walked the three miles to Blessed Sacrament Church for Midnight Mass that Christmas Eve. When we returned home, we were allowed to open one gift before going to bed and our subsequent Christmas morning celebration. I chose the big box wrapped in Kraft® brown paper, carefully constructed from old grocery bags. Mom could really make a present look tempting with just the right touch of colored ribbon.

When I removed the wrapping, there it was—a Gilbert chemistry set carefully packed in a blue metal box that opened just like a book. Now

mind you, I was only eight years old and could barely read the instruction booklet. What parent today would buy their eight-year-old son a chemistry set, especially one such as those sold in the 1950s before formation of the Environmental Protection Agency and its safety laws? A typical set had all of the ingredients necessary to make interesting products such as gunpowder (flowers of sulfur plus charcoal powder plus potassium nitrate), rocket propellants (zinc powder plus flowers of sulfur), a spontaneous igniting fire bomb (glycerin plus potassium permanganate), or perhaps nitrogen triiodide (iodine crystals plus ammonium hydroxide), which when carefully dried would violently explode at the tickle of a feather.<sup>6</sup> My father wanted me to be a medical doctor, so he thought the chemistry set might inspire me. And inspire me it did—but not to a career in medicine. However, this inspiration wasn't completely obvious to me until I really immersed myself into the exciting process of creating something new.

After a month or so in my basement laboratory, concocting pyrotechnics and stink bombs, I checked out from the public library a neat recipe book of “1001 Useful Formulas” that described products I could make from common chemicals available at the hardware and drug stores. I decided to “go into business.” My mom and dad were supportive, and my grandparents tolerated me; they let me build my laboratory in their basement, hoping I would someday become a scientist who would solve many of the world's problems—especially theirs, e.g., arthritis, “agita” (Sicilian dialect for indigestion and gas pains), and especially intense malaise and sleepiness after three glasses of their homemade wine.

My father asked a friend of his to make me some “company” labels—O & O Research Labs (“O” stood for “organic”)—and I started making and packaging my own soap, cosmetics, inks, cleaning fluid—you name it—and then selling my “products” in the neighborhood. Most people, either feeling sorry for me or just intrigued by a young “scientist,” began to buy more and more of my products. It was fantastic! I loved the idea that I could make things in my lab, and that somebody was actually willing to pay for them! The money was important, but the positive feedback for something of value that I had created was even more important and incredibly invigorating.

I even learned about technical service. I convinced Mrs. Semeresky, who owned the neighborhood grocery store, to sell my ink and I would split the profits with her. Actually it was revenues—I had no idea if I ever made a profit. I supplied her with bottles that were twice the volume of Waterman's Ink and sold them for half the price. I was going to put Water-

man's out of business! The kids who went to the neighborhood schools bought all the ink I could make. In those days we used fountain pens, the kind that had an internal rubber bladder that was filled with ink from a bottle by depressing and then releasing a small external lever on the barrel of the pen.

And then the problem arose. I still remember the formulation. I mixed 1 gram of ferric ammonium chloride with 1 gram of sodium ferrocyanide in fifty milliliters of water. This makes a beautiful deep Prussian blue color of ferric ferrocyanide. Then heat the solution to about 75° C and add 0.5 grams of gum Arabic, and 1 drop of calcium hypochlorite solution (bleach) to prevent the gum Arabic from growing bacteria. Cool and then bottle and you have an ink that is as good as any other that could be bought at the time. At that early stage in my technology career, I couldn't even read the chemical names, so I called the ingredients "ferric ammunition chloride" and "sodium ferro-nod-egg." On this occasion I was making a big batch of ink, and I must have inadvertently added too much gum Arabic. Its function was to help the ink adhere properly to paper.

Mrs. Semeresky subsequently received numerous complaints that pens were clogging and then not working at all. She said if I didn't fix the problem, there would be no more sales of my products in her store—ever! I collected all of the clogged pens, brought them home, and in Mom's kitchen boiled them in a large pot of water for an hour. That solved the problem. I returned the pens with two free bottles of properly prepared ink. It was a big success, and the kids in the neighborhood continued to buy my ink. Mrs. Semeresky was proud of me, and I guess I was, too.

I didn't quite realize it at the time, but *I had discovered that I loved using technology to create a product that brought real value to the world, and that someone wanted badly enough to be willing to pay for it.* I then and there decided that I wanted to be a scientist, not a medical doctor, as my father might have wished. However, to be fair, over the years he was supportive of my chosen endeavor. This was a critical crossroads in my life, where I could have gone right or left. I didn't ask for the chemistry set. It was handed to me by the universe through my dad's good intentions. I could have taken the other path, and used the chemistry set for a time and discarded it, just as I did with many of my other toys. But, somehow, I chose to listen to where this adventure wanted to take me.

In retrospect, I believe quite strongly that it was my father's emotional support that led me in that direction. He was proud of my little

neighborhood entrepreneurial business. He also constantly encouraged me to study science and mathematics. Over the years, I spent nearly every penny I earned to build and maintain a large laboratory in our basement. I had a number of severe near misses, explosions—you name it—that I survived. However, in one instance, just barely. It was chemistry that led me at age ten to nearly leave this world.

It was a cold winter Tuesday afternoon on January 22, 1952, a date etched in my memory for reasons you will appreciate in a moment. I stayed home from school with a cold. Dad gave strict orders to Mom that I was not to play in my lab in the cellar. He said it was too damp and I would only get sicker. But as the day wore on, I was bored and asked my mom if I could bring parts of my chemistry lab up to the kitchen table and do some experiments while she ironed clothes in the same room. She reluctantly agreed. In the course of the afternoon, I did several experiments as Mom put up with the yucky odors that permeated her kitchen as she was preparing garlic-laced tomato sauce for that evening's pasta. However, not even garlic could compete with the aromas I created as a byproduct of my alchemy!

At one point I was formulating a new potent spot remover that I wanted to sell in the neighborhood. I had trouble opening a tube filled with finely-divided calcium hypochlorite powder, a potent bleaching agent. The corked tube had been tightly sealed by the manufacturer with a cellulose plastic coating. I pulled on the plastic-coated cork with all of my might. Then, as best I can remember, it popped and the calcium hypochlorite, which apparently had been vacuum-packed, exploded into my face as air rushed into the tube and displaced the vacuum. It temporarily blinded me and filled my nose and throat with a fine white cloud of the poisonous substance. Fortunately, my mom was there and she immediately flushed my eyes and had me drink some water. I could barely stand up. Mom was crying and simultaneously praying rapidly and incessantly in Sicilian dialect to the Blessed Mother.

We didn't own a car, so she immediately called for an ambulance. Unfortunately, none was available because at 3:45 p.m. that same afternoon American Airlines Flight 6780, intent on landing at Newark Airport, crashed into a home adjacent to the Elizabeth River, just missing Battin High School for girls by but a few feet. Every available ambulance in Elizabeth was sent to the crash scene. Mom was able to get my Aunt Mary who lived nearby to take me to the emergency room, where, in view of the plane crash, I was lucky to get medical attention. I was examined by a physician and an

eye doctor, both of whom said I appeared to be fine, having regurgitated most of the poison in route to the hospital.

However, the next day, whether caused by the toxin or not, no one would ever say, my appendix burst in my stomach leading to a severe case of deadly peritonitis. I was hospitalized and given very little chance to survive, and as a good Catholic boy received Last Rites. Months later, I was told by my grandparents that this experience was among the most difficult times for my parents.

I was delirious with fever for nearly seven days, but during the early morning hours on that last day, my high fever broke and I awoke in the morning reasonably alert and saw Mom sleeping in a chair at the foot of my bed. I had finally responded to the huge levels of intravenous antibiotics that were flowing through my veins and was on my way to what would be a very slow recovery.

It was also chemistry that apparently led me to have what is known as a “near-death experience” during my illness. I told my mom that I had a vivid “dream” in which I was walking in a brightly-lit tunnel and had met several people who said they were waiting for me, but that it was too early for me to be there. One of them appeared to be my grandfather who had died a couple of years before I was born. When I explained this “dream” to Mom and the doctors, the doctors smiled, but Mom’s reaction was very different. With tears of joy streaming down her face and her Rosary in hand, she confided that she didn’t think it was fantasy and that I was very lucky to have recovered. Much to the surprise and concern of friends and family, I continued my deep passion for chemistry and with the full support of my parents.

Eventually it was the right choice at this crossroads that enabled me to generate the passion to pursue and receive my doctorate in physical chemistry, to become a Director of R&D for Exxon, and to found two public technology companies. To this day I continue to publish articles in magazines in an effort to educate the public on the challenges of key issues such as energy security and climate change. All of this sprang forth from personal passion created by that first Gilbert chemistry set and by the unwavering encouragement of my dad and others. The next chapter in my life was about to be written.

While in graduate school I continued to play with the Royal Teens, and in 1966 we decided to work the summer at clubs in Manhattan—the famous Wagon Wheel and the Peppermint Lounges on West 45th Street—and at

the Jersey Shore—Augie Hoffman’s Hoffman House in Point Pleasant, the Pillow Talk Lounge in Asbury Park, The Pinup Lounge in Atlantic Highlands, and at the Beachcomber and Chatterbox in Seaside Heights. Through a set of circuitous circumstances—there are no coincidences in this universe—I received an opportunity to work during that summer as a Research Fellow at Exxon with an internationally-recognized scientist, Dr. John H. Sinfelt. John had been nominated several times for the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his groundbreaking work in catalytic science, the subject of my doctoral thesis. I couldn’t pass up the opportunity, so I decided for that summer I would work at Exxon during the day and sing with the Royal Teens at night, sleeping mostly on the weekends! It was a most amazing and exhausting summer.

I was very careful to keep my scientific and entertainment lives quite separate. It was the 1960s and I didn’t want anyone to think I was a “flake.” Would anyone in science take me seriously if they knew I was working in rock and roll, and in fact, you might even posit the converse, as well? But, as author and *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman likes to say, “The world is flat!” And I saw that quite clearly one afternoon, a couple of weeks after starting my summer fellowship at Exxon.

John assigned me to share an office with Dr. David J. C. Yates, a sometimes-thorny, Cambridge-educated Englishman and one of the bright international stars in catalytic and surface science. That afternoon Dave was desperately trying to convince me that thermodynamics, when applied to catalytic surfaces, was nonsense. Of course I was two years into my doctorate thesis doing just that kind of “nonsense.” As I defended my case in higher-pitched tones, John walked in and began to facilitate the debate so that we both saw each other’s point of view.

A short time later, a pretty blond mail girl entered the office, and before she could place the mail on our respective desks, she exclaimed with excitement, “Dino, I saw you on TV last night with the Royal Teens. Can I have your autograph?” My jaw dropped, and before I could say anything, David and John inquired with authentic excitement in unison, “Who are you?” As it so happened they were both amused and impressed when I finally confessed the details of my story.

John taught me more about practical chemistry and physics in one summer than I had learned in my prior two years of graduate school. For that reason, upon graduating from Rutgers with my doctorate I decided to go to work at Exxon. I knew I would finally leave the Royal Teens, when my



first daughter Doreen was born January 3, 1967. I felt I should get a full-time respectable “day job.” Besides, with an emerging family, I didn’t want to go on the road again. That never works well in the long run, especially when you have young children.

So I accepted my first full-time day job on November 1, 1967, with Exxon as a research scientist in the Catalysis Research Group, the area I had worked in for my doctoral thesis at Rutgers—for the annual salary of \$15,000. But it wasn’t the money I was after; it was a chance to learn practical technology with the *crème de la crème* of research scientists and engineers in industrial catalytic science. I wanted to solve real-world problems and make it a better place to live. Since my involvement as a kid in my basement chemistry lab, I had come to love the innovation process—use good science to solve practical problems, and then through creative technology development, bring highly-desirable, valuable products to the market place. And Exxon was a great place to do just that.

At Exxon I learned a lot about commercial technology development, and within a few years, thanks to John Sinfelt, I became the youngest research director in Exxon’s Corporate Research Laboratory. It was wonderful schooling, jam-packed with the best and brightest from only the top schools such as Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, MIT, and Cal Tech. At the time, I was the only graduate from Rutgers University in the Corporate Research Laboratory. The group I managed—Catalytic Science & Technology—was talented, productive, and responsible for creating hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenues for the company, much of it based on John Sinfelt’s science and inventions. It was a wonderful and truly enlightening experience. Several of our young team members went on to become famous scientists and engineers in the field of catalysis.

But the large corporate bureaucracy was too much for my entrepreneurial spirit—too many meetings, too much internal reporting, and too many “dog and pony shows.” So in 1974, much to the disbelief of Exxon’s President of Research & Engineering, who had told me that I was pegged for a vice presidency at Exxon, I gave up my enviable position as Director of Catalytic R&D, and headed west to California’s Silicon Valley to start my own company. I made this dramatic move with two close friends, Ricardo Levy, an incredibly personable, bright, and successful research engineer from Exxon’s Materials Science Group, and the late Michel Boudart, a world-famous catalytic scientist and Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at Stanford University.



I made this decision after numerous consultations with John Sinfelt, who was not only supportive, but encouraged me to follow “my dream”—even though he would personally feel the loss of my presence at Exxon. He was a very tall “giant” in my life journey. His selfless encouragement and counsel at this critical juncture in my life were one of the most significant factors for my subsequent success as an entrepreneur.

There were a couple of incestuous connections involved in this founders’ triad. Ricardo received his doctorate in chemical engineering with Michel at Stanford, and Michel was one of Exxon’s long-time, top consultants, especially to my group in catalysis. Exxon was not happy with the three of us when we chose to leave, and made it very clear on several occasions. I knew that we must be on to something important when the vice president of R&D threatened to compete with us.

Our new endeavor was actually precipitated one day early in 1974 when I had returned from a technical presentation to Neil Hakala, then the President of Exxon Research & Engineering. Our group had developed a new catalytic hydrogenation process that could make highly profitable products with projected annual revenues of \$75 million. Neil listened carefully and graciously to my presentation and commented on the high quality of the work, and then within what seemed like a nanosecond said, “No interest. Exxon cannot afford the time and resources to play with products that yield only \$75 million per year in revenues.” In retrospect, he clearly was right.

Back in the laboratory, I lamented to Jim Costello, one of our research technicians by saying, “You know, I would love to take this technology from Exxon and start my own company. After all, \$75 million per year is not a bad start!” Ricardo was in the lab using our computer system. All ears, he jumped up, pulled me by the arm into my office across the hall, sat me in my chair, perched on my desk, stared into my eyes with semi-contained excitement and said, “Did you really mean that you would like to start your own company?” A simple “yes” was all it took. It so happened that Ricardo, a brilliant chemical engineer from a successful, entrepreneurial, German Jewish refugee family in Quito, Ecuador, had been in preliminary discussions with Michel Boudart to start a company. My dear friend Ricardo Levy—one of the tallest, if not *the* tallest— of all the “giants” in my life.

On November 1, 1974, during the worst recessions since World War II, we walked out of Exxon with a simple strategic plan in our heads—start with consulting; the first customer would be the U.S. Government; then

steadily transition to private industry and, hopefully, some day make our own products.

Ricardo and I had a dream. We had discovered our fundamental purpose deep down inside our very souls—we were experts in catalytic science and technology. We understood the rugged journey of taking a catalyst discovery in the laboratory through pilot-plant scale-up all the way to commercialization. We now understood that was our fundamental professional *essence*. And *we connected that capability with an urgent need in the world, one that could make it a better place in which to live—cleaner, lower cost products through catalysis, thereby helping to create a sustainable future.* We were passionate, we were on our way, we had absolutely no doubt we would succeed. The hell with the recession!

### **Life No. 3—Silicon Valley Entrepreneur**

The year 1974 was a difficult one economically, worldwide. The country was smack-dab in the middle of the first Arab Oil Embargo. OPEC had announced that they would no longer ship oil to countries that had supported Israel in the Yom Kippur War. The United States, Western Europe, and Japan were especially affected. Interest rates in the United States topped 20 percent. The price of oil went through the roof and Americans lined up for hours at filling stations to buy a couple of gallons of gasoline. It was a real mess. But, somehow Ricardo and I were immune to these negative forces. Sure, we felt the pressure in our sales efforts, but we were convinced that during economically troubled times such as these there would eventually be a need for more efficient, cleaner, low-cost technologies to make fuels, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals, and our know-how in catalytic technologies would be highly valued. We just had to figure out a way to operate until that “eventually” arrived. The answer was consulting.

Having no external funding, Michel, Ricardo, and I each contributed a hard-earned \$10,000, and started our company as a consulting group—Catalytica Associates, Inc.—with Michel opening doors for us, and Ricardo and I doing the work as full-time employees. Michel’s help immediately won us two contracts worth a total of nearly \$200,000, one with the U.S. Energy Research Development Administration (ERDA),<sup>7</sup> and the other with the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) in Palo Alto, California, where we located our first office at Palo Alto Square, close to Michel at Stanford University. We were only three employees, Ricardo, me, and a secretary.

We thought, “Wow, that kind of money should go a long way to taking care of our modest monthly salaries for quite some time!”

We were quite naïve financially in the beginning, but fortunately we were quick learners and became intimately familiar with cash flow management. ERDA and EPRI, like many organizations, do not pay until the work is properly completed, and even then not for a few months. Ricardo was forced to borrow money from his kind mother-in-law to pay our bills and salaries. But we quickly got the hang of things and after creating a line of credit with Silicon Valley Bank, we were on our way.

As an international star in the field of Catalysis, Michel made it easier for us to meet important government and corporate personnel and to attract and hire the world’s most knowledgeable consulting associates, and ultimately super employees. He also was an incredibly bright intellectual filter and made it difficult for us to make any serious technical faux pas in the work we did. However, there were many years of distance between Michel on one hand, and Ricardo and me on the other. This difference in age meant that Michel wanted to see financial compensation sooner rather than later. After all, he was much closer to retirement age than Ricardo and I were. We never even thought about the concept of retirement and still don’t. As young entrepreneurs in our early 30s, we also did not worry about compensation. Yes, after the first few years we paid ourselves fairly, but much more important to us was the fact that Catalytica was our “baby,” and *we desperately wanted it to make the world a better place in which to live*. That was the primal force behind everything we did. This difference in values was sometimes a source of tension between Michel and us, but through mutual respect we managed to get past the problems.

Michel was also a super-bright academic intellectual, and while both Ricardo and I thrived on science, we were commercially driven. The work we did had to address a market or, even better, create one. For example, we decided that strategically, as a means to generate greater revenues and profits, it would be beneficial to produce technical market-driven multi-client studies that were relevant to the concerns of industry at the time. As a consequence of the Arab Oil Embargo the world was in the midst of the last major energy crisis, so the first topic that Ricardo and I chose for a multi-client study was directed at increasing America’s energy security. It was a technical analysis and commercial perspective for the conversion of coal to chemicals and fuels using the most up-to-date catalytic technologies. There was an abundance of government and corporate funding available for

R&D on this subject as the Western world tried to move out of the clutches of the oil-rich Middle East and toward energy independence.

Michel, on the other hand, lobbied strongly for us to do a study on what is known as chiral catalysis, the use of catalytic chemistry to produce only the truly active form of a drug molecule. Many drug molecules often exist as both a “left” and “right” hand form—the word “chiral” comes from the Greek word meaning “hand.” These forms are referred to as the L-isomer and the R-isomer, respectively. Usually, one isomer is therapeutic, while the other may be either inactive or often has serious negative side effects. The thalidomide debacle of the late 1950s is a prime example of what can go wrong. The final drug, taken by pregnant women for morning sickness, was a 50/50 mixture of both the L-isomer and R-isomer of thalidomide. One isomer was indeed therapeutic, but the other turned out to be a teratogen, which caused terrible birth defects.

While chiral catalysis was and still is important, Ricardo and I felt that coal-to-fuels-and-chemicals as a means to minimize the United States’ dependence on Middle East oil was more relevant and urgent at the time. We were right. It was too early for a multi-client study on chiral catalysis. Our first study on coal-to-fuels-and-chemicals became a global “best seller”—more than \$2 million in revenues, and hugely profitable, especially for a company with low fixed costs and only a few employees. Furthermore, it gave us great credibility and brought about a number of additional contracts. Equally important, in carrying out these multi-client studies we were getting paid to analyze in detail important new technologies, thereby continuing our education concerning cutting edge science and global industrial problems and interests.

It was quite difficult at times, but with some luck and lots of hard work, our reputation began to take off and we were able to hire more members to our team. We became a world-recognized consulting group in the field of catalysis, and we saved our clients millions of dollars annually by improving their chemical processes. At the time, catalysis was responsible for nearly 25 percent of our global GDP, so we had an extensive market. As planned, we initially worked for the U.S. Government and quasi-governmental groups such as EPRI, but eventually we moved our efforts into the industrial sector. Clients included Merck, Pfizer, Atlantic Richfield Company, American Cyanamid, Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceuticals, Dow Chemical, Calgon, and many other Fortune 500 chemical and energy companies.

After a while it occurred to us that we were selling our experience, knowledge, and know-how too cheaply. We would improve a process for a company, saving them millions of dollars annually and get paid simply for our time. We decided to change our strategy. Up until that point, our growth was financed completely from profits. In 1983 we began raising venture capital to develop and commercialize our own technologies.

This was a difficult transition emotionally because it was the first move towards giving up the complete control that Ricardo, Michel, and I had as Catalytica Associates, now renamed Catalytica, Inc. However, it was the only way we could achieve our dream of creating valuable products that were manufactured, providing revenues even as we slept at night. The productive capacity of the company did not stop when our employees went home. *Most importantly, it also gave us an opportunity to make an even bigger positive impact on the world, and that really put fire under our already existing passion.* A product strategy also allowed us to achieve a greater return on our investment of time, money, and emotional energy.

Ricardo and I had excellent guidance from our board during that period, particularly from Paul Cook, founder and CEO of the multibillion-dollar Raychem Corporation; Carl Djerassi, a pioneer at Syntex Corporation and “father” of the birth control pill synthesis, as well as the founder and CEO of Zoecon Corporation; Ernest Mario, CEO of Alza Corporation and a former CEO of Glaxo Wellcome Pharmaceuticals; and Barry Bloom, Executive Vice President of R&D at Pfizer. These board members helped us chart our journey.

But perhaps one of the most influential of all was a true gentleman by the name of Tommy Davis, founder of the Mayfield Fund, and an early investor in Silicon Graphics, Amgen, Genentech, Immunex, and Tandem Computers. The Mayfield Fund was our first venture partner, providing us with \$3 million in 1983. Tommy truly loved Ricardo and me; it was people who mattered to him. He would often say, “I’ll take an “A” Team with a “B” idea any day over the converse!” Not that Catalytica had “B” ideas, but Tommy convinced his partners at Mayfield that since they did so well with their investment in Genentech, a world leader in *genetic engineering*, they might just do the same with Catalytica, a world leader in *molecular engineering* of catalysts. As it happened, he turned out to be right.

Between 1983 and 1993 we raised nearly \$250 million in venture financing and divided the company into three business units, Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (CPI), Catalytica Energy Systems, Inc. (CESI), and Catalytica Technologies, Inc. (CTI). All three businesses were directed

at socially-beneficial, cost-effective products and processes—low-cost pharmaceuticals made using environmentally-friendly processes; low-cost sustainable energy systems; and in CTI we continued a modest segment of our initial strategy to use our extensive know-how in catalysis to improve existing processes, making them cleaner and lower cost.

We were creating “green” and sustainable technologies well before the terms were coined. *Our commitment and capability to develop commercial processes to manufacture products in a way that was lower cost and cleaner was what excited and motivated not only Ricardo, Michel, and me, but also our employees, especially when times were challenging. We knew we were making a positive difference in the world and that eventually that difference would bring an excellent return to all of the stakeholders in our company; not just to our shareholders, but also to our employees, our customers, our suppliers, our community—and yes, to the world.*

At CESI our Catalytic Combustion Team invented and developed the world’s first practical, operating catalytic combustor system for gas turbines, expressly for the purpose of generating clean electricity. We had partner relationships with General Electric and Kawasaki Turbines and ran our system in a power plant in Santa Clara, California, for more than 1,000 hours with no problems. Because of the unique function of our catalytic system, we could produce electricity with essentially no formation of harmful smog-producing nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), unburned hydrocarbons (UHC), and carbon monoxide (CO). The first time GE tested our XONON™ Cool Combustion system at their research facility in Schenectady, New York,<sup>8</sup> they thought that their NO<sub>x</sub> measuring device was broken when it showed zero NO<sub>x</sub>. They replaced the device with a new one only to find that zero NO<sub>x</sub> was correct!

We managed an initial public offering on the NASDAQ stock exchange in February 1993. With several follow-up public and private offerings over the next five years, we raised well over \$200 million to make Catalytica one of the most successful and fastest growing companies in Silicon Valley. By far, our efforts in pharmaceuticals (CPI) exceeded everyone’s expectations. CPI grew, in less than five years, from several people and no sales to 1,800 people, nearly \$500 million in revenues, \$60 million in free cash flow, and a market value of close to \$1 billion.

This clearly was not your usual organic growth. We ramped up reasonably rapidly through the acquisition of three state-of-the-art manufacturing plants, our prize site being the Glaxo Wellcome plant in Greenville, North

Carolina. Although we went out of our way to hire the best people, I was still amazed how quickly we became proficient across the entire spectrum of research, development, engineering, manufacturing, clinical support services, sales, and marketing. Much of this success had to do with our Inspired Leadership management style (a form of Inspirational Leadership<sup>®</sup> as discussed in chapter 7) and continual team building throughout the company. From our roots as a research organization we became a fully-integrated pharmaceutical manufacturing company.

At one point we were producing more than fifty major drugs for the top pharmaceutical companies throughout the world. For example, we made nearly the world's supply of GlaxoSmithKlein's AZT, or Zidovudine<sup>®</sup> the primary effective treatment for AIDS at the time. We also produced Zyban<sup>®</sup>, a smoking cessation drug, Wellbutrin<sup>®</sup> for treating depression and anxiety, and Lanoxin<sup>®</sup>, a digoxin drug for cardiovascular disease. We manufactured a large number of over-the-counter drugs including the world's supply of Neosporin<sup>®</sup>, Sudafed<sup>®</sup>, and Actifed<sup>®</sup>—billions of tablets per year. We became the “gold standard” for pharmaceutical manufacturing and the envy of all of our global competitors.

Acquisition of the Glaxo plant was a “miracle” in itself. In 1996 Catalytica had annual revenues of about \$20 million. We wanted to expand our effort in pharmaceutical manufacturing, and at that point our strategy called for development of processes for the manufacture of just the active ingredient in drugs; the so-called “bulk active.” However, when Glaxo acquired Wellcome Pharmaceuticals, and it became clear that for political reasons they were going to sell the Wellcome plant in Greenville, North Carolina, rather than Glaxo plants in the United Kingdom, we were ready.

Greenville was one of the most advanced pharmaceutical plants in the world, totally self-contained, manufacturing everything from the bulk active ingredients in drugs to the final dosage form—tablets, liquids, injectables, and so forth. They even produced their own packaging. At the Greenville facility Wellcome had just built one of the most advanced design sterile plants in the world for the production of injectable drugs. We wanted to buy the Greenville plant, but it meant a huge change in strategy—a move from producing only the bulk active ingredients in drugs to manufacturing the final packaged drug. If successful, we would become one of the world's largest pharmaceutical contract manufacturers in the industry.

Our board, Ricardo, and I struggled with this, but in a moment of truth and after discussion with key “giants” on our board, we decided to go for



it. It is quite a story in itself, as to how little ole Catalytica competed with several international multibillion-dollar companies for the plant. But in the end, we won the bid, and with the help of Howard Hoffen, the Managing Director of Morgan Stanley Capital Partners, we raised the \$300 million necessary to purchase the plant and Howard became an important and productive member of our board.

The more than 1,500 employees at the Greenville plant were ecstatic that Catalytica won the acquisition because we saved their jobs, whereas our bidding competitors would likely have dismissed a large number of them and brought in their own people for operations. Ricardo and I were also overjoyed. I vividly recall the closing celebration in Greenville, which was televised, attended by numerous political dignitaries and all of the employees. There were more than 2,000 people in the large auditorium where senior executives from Glaxo Wellcome, Ricardo, and I gave our presentations. Just before my turn at the podium, I leaned over to Ricardo and told him not to be too surprised at what I was about to do. He looked at me quizzically, but without concern; we had immense mutual trust. After my presentation, I sang a cappella “The Impossible Dream” from the musical *The Man from La Mancha*. When I finished, a number of the employees were in tears, and I received a standing ovation. It had been a challenging win for all of us, and we were all grateful for the outcome. It was among the most powerful moments in my professional career.

Within four years this acquisition raised Catalytica’s annual revenues of about \$20 million to almost \$500 million. The employees in Greenville loved us and we loved them. However, merging two very diverse cultures, a reserved one from the deep South with that of our go-get ‘em team in Silicon Valley was not easy, but we succeeded. Ricardo and I practically lived in Greenville for the first year, and we made a number of transfers in both the easterly and westerly directions.

I personally dedicated nearly full time to our efforts in pharmaceuticals by taking on the role of Chairman and CEO of Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc. in addition to my role as Chairman of the parent company, Catalytica, Inc. To help things transition more smoothly, we hired Dr. Gabriel Cipau as President and Chief Operating Officer of CPI and eventually promoted him to CEO of CPI. Gabe had managed the Greenville facility several years before when it was owned exclusively by Wellcome Pharmaceuticals. We also did lots of team building and within a year we were doing well, especially as we continued to negotiate significant additional contracts



with Glaxo Wellcome and other major pharmaceutical companies to manufacture some of their important commercial drugs.

The next step in our strategy was to use our technology to assist major pharmaceutical companies in their development of low-cost, clean processes for manufacturing new drugs that were in clinical trials. You see, when an organic chemist decides to synthesize a potential new drug molecule, he or she is not concerned at that point with the manufacturing process before the drug proves to be successful. If, in the end, the drug molecule proves to be potent and clinically acceptable, often the laboratory synthesis might require ten or more complicated steps, using toxic raw materials. Even if each step were to provide 90 percent yield of the desired product, 0.9 multiplied by itself ten times means a final yield of only 35 percent. Sixty-five percent of the raw materials are lost.

However, using our catalytic know-how and technologies, we were often successful in developing a manufacturing process that might have three or four steps, and also eliminated the necessity for highly-toxic or dangerous starting materials. This inevitably had significant economic and ecological benefits.

We were successful with a number of new drugs. For example, our technology helped in the development of the manufacturing process for Aricept<sup>®</sup>, the Eisai-Pfizer drug for treating Alzheimer's disease. Pfizer was so impressed that they invested \$15 million into CPI as a means of accessing our technologies and know-how for the manufacture of their new drugs.

Catalytica Pharmaceuticals became so successful that in 2000 one of our largest competitors, the multibillion-dollar DSM Pharmaceuticals in the Netherlands, made our shareholders "an offer they couldn't refuse." In 1997 DSM had competed against us unsuccessfully for the purchase of the Greenville plant. This time they succeeded: we sold Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, spun off Catalytica Technologies, and kept only the remaining Catalytica Energy Systems as the Catalytica mainstay on the NASDAQ. We made our shareholders very happy.

Tommy Davis's intuition had been right on target. We provided a significant financial return to the Mayfield Fund and to all of our investors. In time, we merged CESI with RENEGY, a renewable energy company. Thanks to the "giants" who provided sound guidance and counsel to Ricardo and me, Catalytica's technologies and tentacles touched hundreds of companies, millions of people, and made this a better world. It was a special gift for me to be part of the adventure.

## Life No. 4—Movie Producer

At roughly the same time that all of these changes were occurring, I “retired”—I really dislike the word—from Catalytica to help my screenplay-writer wife, Jane, set up Chateau Wally Films and produce a movie entitled *What Matters Most*.<sup>9</sup> The film was to be directed by Jane<sup>10</sup> and it co-starred Polly Cole,<sup>11</sup> then Polly Cusumano, my youngest daughter at the time, and an actress living in Los Angeles. Ricardo stayed on at Catalytica to negotiate the sale of the pharmaceutical business and to manage the remaining business unit, CESI.

My early retirement was driven primarily by personal reasons. Jane had just fought a nasty battle with breast cancer, having faced intensive chemotherapy, a mastectomy, breast reconstruction, and numerous rounds of alternative medicine in Mexico and other parts of the world, since these therapies were illegal in the United States. Her cancer was finally in remission. I was determined to help her get healthy again and to pursue her dream. Jane wanted to direct her film. I knew that would be a tough sell with major film distributors. We moved to Ojai, a small artists’ community in southern California near Santa Barbara, where we bought a heritage home on a small horse ranch. Horses were Jane’s hobby. She competed regularly in dressage and was quite good at it.

Ojai was also a respite for many of the big-time Los Angeles movie stars, producers, and directors. They all had second homes there, including Reese Witherspoon, Diane Ladd, Laura Dern, Larry Hagman, Tim Burton, Ted Danson, Jake Gyllenhaal, Jerry Bruckheimer, Malcolm MacDowell, and Anthony Hopkins. Some of them were our neighbors and good friends and wonderful counselors for the neophytes that we were in this challenging business called “movie making.” We were particularly indebted to our good friends and next-door neighbors, Robert Hunter, former CEO of PepsiCo Food Systems, now an author and movie producer; and his wife, actress Diane Ladd, and her daughter, actress Laura Dern. They were always available for advice and counsel and made sure that Jane and I were at many of their parties to meet the rest of the Hollywood crowd from Ojai.

I introduced Jane and her screenplay, entitled *What Matters Most*, to Sherry Lansing, then Chairwoman and CEO of Paramount Pictures. I had met Sherry through David Koch, who sat on our board at Catalytica. David, who dated Sherry when they were both single, and his brother Charles own and run Koch Industries, the second largest privately-held company in the U.S., an energy and chemical conglomerate with annual sales of more than \$100 billion.

Sherry loved the screenplay, and she liked Jane, but there was no way she could accept Jane as the director. It was the typical Hollywood “chicken-and-egg” syndrome—you can’t become a director unless you’re well known, and you can’t become well known unless you direct successful movies. I discussed this with Jane and she and I thought, “Well, maybe we should bring it to the other studios?” But that would have taken months to get through the bureaucracies, especially as we had no contacts at the other studios. *And that was the critical crossroads, but I wouldn’t know it for about a year—do we go to other studios, or do we bite the bullet and fund the movie ourselves?* Although the budget for the film was not small by any means, we had enough funds since Catalytica had gone public a few years earlier, so financing wasn’t an issue. But the probability of getting any return on our investment, by Hollywood statistics, was less than 1 percent.

Jane and I wrestled with the problem for three days and nights and then finally, after a long discussion, she proclaimed with great insight and commitment, *“Let’s start our own film company and shoot it ourselves. So what if neither of us know anything about making a movie or running a film company; it can’t be that difficult.” In that moment of truth, I knew that she was right. She was the “giant” in my life at that moment in time. And that’s exactly what we did.*

She auditioned numerous actors, and finally in addition to our daughter Polly, she chose Chad Allen, Gretchen German, Tamara Clatterbuck, Marshall Teague, and Jim Metzler as the lead actors. All were “second tier” but amazingly capable actors and had been featured in a number of major films. I hired Charla Driver, a competent and highly-experienced producer. She in turn helped me hire Richard Munchkin, a director, a technology-based professional blackjack player,<sup>12</sup> and probably the only person with any directing experience who would have agreed to be Jane’s advisor and consultant. Charla and “Munch,” as we called him, hired all of the other personnel required to make the film. As executive producer I took charge of the financial controls.

On September 1, 2000, we were three days away from leaving for Amarillo, Texas, twenty miles from the three hundred-person town of Vega, located near historic U.S. Route 66 where we would shoot the entire film. Jane returned that afternoon from her oncologist visit in the Bay Area with the devastating news—her cancer had returned with a vengeance—stage IV—and she needed to go on chemotherapy immediately. How serious is that? There is no stage V. I asked her what she wanted to do. “I’m going to

make that film, that's what I'm going to do!" I called her doctor to set up for chemotherapy treatments in Amarillo at the Harrington Cancer Center, and she would direct the film as planned. To this day, I'm sure her doctor agreed and was supportive because she knew there was not much of a probability that Jane would beat the disease.

We went to Texas; we made the movie, and Jane received chemotherapy every Friday morning, right before shooting. It was a very difficult time for all, but the actors and crew were inspired by her tenacity and courage. Some days she could barely walk, and we were often shooting twelve to fifteen hour days.

Jane helped edit the film, and when finished, I immediately brought it to Sherry Lansing. She loved it, but it had no big name actors and therefore it was not for Paramount. On May 1, 2001, immediately after completion of the final cut of the film, Jane viewed it on the big screen at a studio that I rented in Los Angeles. She was amazingly proud of it, and rightfully so. A month later, on June 1, 2001, Jane lost her battle with breast cancer. She died in my arms at Cottage Hospital in Santa Barbara, California. Even though we saw it coming, it was devastating for Polly and me.

The news of Jane's death spread rapidly after a long article about her appeared in the Los Angeles Times. Sherry called me almost immediately from her car as she was on her way to LAX to fly to Venice where Paramount was shooting *The Italian Job*, starring Mark Wahlberg and Charlize Theron. After offering her sympathy, she encouraged me to approach Lifetime TV with the film. It was clear to me that Sherry, always the gracious person she is, and another "giant" along my life journey, had opened a door for me at Lifetime, the largest cable TV network in the world.

Jane never thought her film would be distributed; less than 1 percent of all films made ever are. It is a difficult, wretched business. All she wanted to do was to direct *What Matters Most*, with our daughter Polly in the lead—and she did just that, and more. She had no expectations of distribution. But I always thought differently. I guess it's my marketing mentality.

Chateau Wally Films and *What Matters Most* was a passion of personal intent, but certainly a one-off project. Jane was battling breast cancer and desperately wanted to direct this film, even if she ultimately did not survive the disease. I was not cut out to be a moviemaker, nor am I passionate about any of the aspects of making films. However, I was intensely passionate about seeing my wife reach her dream before she lost her battle with breast cancer.

Although it was a short-lived “Life No. 4,” the film went on to win numerous awards at international film festivals, including Best Film, Most Promising New Actress, and Best Director at premiere festivals such as The New York International Independent Film & Video Festival, the Los Angeles Win Femme Festival, the Portland Festival of World Cinema, and the Texas Independent Film Festival, among several others. I also hired Alyson Dutch of Brown & Dutch, talented event managers from Malibu, California, to arrange a ten-major-city tour of the film in the United States as a means to raise funds and awareness for breast cancer. It was a very successful undertaking and probably contributed to the ultimate success of *What Matters Most*.

Although few films made ever receive distribution, *What Matters Most* was fortunately licensed to Lifetime Entertainment. The film became one of Lifetime’s most popular movies so they renewed their contract. And today, *What Matters Most* is licensed in more than fifty countries worldwide. *Had we not elected to do the film ourselves, Jane would not have lived long enough to make the film.* What Matters Most was the result of a critical decision created at a crossroads. It was a decision fueled by deep thought, passion, and personal commitment. Jane was the “giant” who asked the right question at the right time, “Why don’t we make this movie ourselves?” And Sherry Lansing was the “giant” who helped it materialize at Lifetime Television. It became a destiny based on several key synchronizations, or as Deepak Chopra likes to say, “a synchrodestiny.”

For quite some time, I held up in our estate in Ojai, California, writing, mountain climbing, and just trying to figure out where to go next with my life. It was a very difficult period. I had two grown daughters, three grandchildren, and although there were several interesting offers to assume the CEO position at technology startups, I really did not want to return to building new enterprises in Silicon Valley. Been there, done that, and the passion was just not there to do it again. I meditated and prayed daily on what to do next. And mostly, I meditated to relieve the relentless anxiety and depression I had suffered since Jane’s death.

### **Life No. 5—Holistic Hotelier**

On January 9, 2002, at 1:30 p.m., Pacific Standard Time, my prayers were answered in a way I had never anticipated when an incredibly talented and beautiful “giant” arrived at my home in Ojai, and I began what would be my entree into “Life No. 5.” David Walker, a friend and film producer

from San Marino, California, asked if he could visit my home, Chateau Wally. The home was so named because it was built in 1926 for the Forbes family<sup>13</sup> by well-known American architect, Wallace Neff. Neff had built homes for many of the Hollywood celebrities during the Golden Age of film, including Mary Pickford, Groucho Marx, Carey Grant, and Douglas Fairbanks, among others. Today, Wallace Neff homes are owned by the likes of Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon, Diane Keaton, Madonna, and Guy Ritchie. Jane and I had restored the home to its natural beauty and David had mentioned that his wife, Iveta, loved to visit heritage properties.

When David and Iveta arrived, I met them at the long circular drive that approached the entrance to my home in Ojai's verdant East End. After a cordial hello, I noticed a tall, statuesque, strikingly-beautiful blond exit from the back of their car. I completely lost my bearings and found myself attracted to her immediately. Her name was Inez Šipulova. She was Iveta's close friend and was visiting from Prague in the Czech Republic. I had no intention of marrying again, or for that matter, even starting a relationship with another woman, but Inez captured my spirit immediately. After Jane's death I became one of the most eligible bachelors from Ojai to Santa Barbara. But I had no interest. I rejected all invitations to parties, dances, teas, you name it. I just wanted to be alone to think and meditate on where to go next with my life, as I journeyed through the various stages of mourning over Jane's death.

However, this time it was just like that scene in the movie *The Godfather* when Michael Corleone, hiding in Sicily from the U.S. authorities, sees and immediately falls in love with the breathtakingly beautiful Apollonia. In Sicilian dialect we like to say he was hit with "fulminare," a thunderbolt! And boy, was I hit—hard! I invited Inez to dinner the next evening. It was a wonderful and engaging experience. I found her not only young, beautiful, and personable, but also intelligent beyond her years. Yes, she is twenty-six years younger than I. Inez unfortunately had to return to Prague in a few days. So I caught the very first flight I could get to Prague, and we have been together ever since. I fell deeply in love with Inez, then with Prague, and finally with a project that she was in the process of developing. After receiving her master's degree in economics and international business in 1988, Inez went to work for several months in Japan, not to Tokyo, but to Kyushu, that country's southernmost island. This was a brave move. Very few people spoke English there, and they were all nearly a meter shorter than she! Inez

is tall, so it must have been quite a sight to see her ride a crowded Japanese subway train. But she was interested—and still is—in Asian culture. She persisted, learned some Japanese, and before long had private use of the president's car and driver at the company where she worked.

In 1989, shortly after her return to Prague, what was then Czechoslovakia went through the famous peaceful “Velvet Revolution” and the fall of communism. The country subsequently divided into two countries, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, or Slovakia. There were numerous business opportunities for graduates who could speak a foreign language, especially English. Inez, being quite fluent in a number of languages including English, quickly found an opportunity which led to her becoming Managing Director of a premier heritage restoration and development company. She worked intensely to build the company, and among her many accomplishments, she converted an old, worn-down Vietnamese market in Prague into an upscale Western style shopping center, the first one in the Czech and Slovak Republics and probably in all of Central and Eastern Europe. It won numerous international awards. Although internationally recognized in her field, Inez eventually decided that she would take a break from her eighty-hour-per-week intense effort and travel the world to decide on a job that was more connected to her spirit and core values.

At about the same time, David and Iveta Walker were considering setting up a non-profit foundation, and Iveta, having Slovak roots as Inez does, asked Inez if she would look for a castle to become home to their foundation. Inez drew a one-hour-drive circle on the map around Prague and visited all of the castles that were potentially for sale. She came across Chateau Mcely in the three-hundred-person village of Mcely (sounds like “meh-selly”). It was dilapidated and in terrible condition, but Inez felt a very special energy there. When she approached the castle entrance for the first time, it was overgrown with weeds and broken branches, and she was met by a part-time caretaker. He stared into her eyes with intent and calmly and mystically inquired, “Where have you been all these years? We have been waiting for you.” It was a truly mystical moment as chills ran through her entire body.

It was the only castle located high on a hill, surrounded by a beautiful forest, with no industry in sight, only lush vegetable farms. She sent a picture of the castle to Iveta, who immediately rejected the possibility of buying it, perhaps because she could not feel what Inez felt, and most probably because it was in such a wretched state.



About six months before we met, Inez bought the castle herself. She had never set out to do so, but there was something tugging at her heart strings that said, “Buy me!” She had preliminary plans to make it into a special retreat where people could go to experience a “higher level of consciousness.” She is fond of quoting Albert Einstein who said, “Problems cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness at which they were created.”

We decided to work on this project together as business partners. Our dream to do so materialized with the help of Inez, this new and very special “giant” in my life. She applied to the European Union for funds to help with the restoration. Although only a small percentage of the overall investment, when we received positive confirmation from the EU we decided—let’s do it! Just as in committing to shoot the movie, *What Matters Most*, this was a high-risk project. In fact we were advised by numerous people in the hospitality business that it would be difficult to attract people to stay in a luxury chateau located in the forest and not in Prague proper. In a sense, it would have to become a highly desirable destination on its own. It had never been done before in either the Czech or Slovak Republics. But when the European Union came through with funding, we decided to do it. And we never looked back.

To be clear, Inez was and still is the primary visionary behind what was to become an internationally recognized property, and arguably the Czech Republic’s most popular castle retreat. Within three years of meeting, we married, gave birth to little Julia, completely renovated the castle, and opened for business in September 2006. Our journey through renovation and opening the Chateau Mcely, a seventeenth century chateau and former residence of the Thurn-Taxis aristocracy,<sup>14</sup> is documented in a heartfelt book written by Inez<sup>15</sup> and in a documentary film.<sup>16</sup> The film runs continuously on one of the TV channels in each of the chateau’s room.

Within a couple of years, the chateau became recognized as one of the most exclusive venues in Central and Eastern Europe for conferences, corporate events, weddings, training, and romantic getaways. We became members of Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH), and soon received a number of prestigious accolades.<sup>17</sup> Chateau Mcely was awarded first place in 2006 as the *Best Hotel Project in the Czech Republic*. In 2007 it was designated by the European Union as *the only GREEN 5-Star hotel in Central and Eastern Europe*, and in 2008 Chateau Mcely won the World Travel Award as *The World’s Leading Green Hotel*, proving that luxury and a respect for nature need not be mutually exclusive. Our team, Inez, and I were more



than grateful and pleased when luxury magazine *Dolce Vita* named Chateau Mcely “The Best Boutique Hotel in the Czech Republic.”

It was the outcome of this article that prompted us to change our operating strategy. We originally intended Chateau Mcely to be an event center for weddings and perhaps corporate events. We would live there full-time and maintain a small core group of employees, expanding our core with part-time help using students from a nearby hotel school whenever an event was booked. When the editor of *Dolce Vita* visited the castle, he fell in love with it and instead of just a few lines of coverage he published a seven-page article containing numerous color photos.

After publication we were inundated by requests to stay at our “hotel.” So, after much thought and consideration, and not unlike the change in strategy we had made at Catalytica when we purchased the world-class pharmaceutical plant in North Carolina, Inez and I decided to respond to the market. We enlarged our staff as necessary and focused our energy and passion on becoming one of the top hotel spas and forest retreats in Central and Eastern Europe.

Under Inez’s direction Chateau Mcely was meticulously renovated to its original neoclassical architecture, yet unobtrusively fitted with all of the conveniences of modern technology—broad band and Wi-Fi throughout, IP telephony, videoconferencing, and plasma TV. Visitors seem to thoroughly enjoy the ambiance of the chateau’s “spirit in nature” venue. After a scenic hike in the adjacent six hundred-hectare game park, they often go for a swim in a naturally-cleansed bio-lake, partake in a specially-prepared royal picnic along the water, relax in our lakeside sauna and Jacuzzi, and then experience the beauty of body meets spirit in the chateau’s spa with one of its specially-designed therapies. Spa products are prepared in the chateau laboratory from locally grown herbs in accordance with ancient alchemical formulae and procedures.

The castle has twenty-three custom suites and rooms, each individually decorated. It sleeps fifty-five people. Unique gourmet dishes from its Piano Nobile Restaurant and fine wines are offered by a talented international chef. In 2010, 2011, and 2012 it was named one of the top ten restaurants in the Czech Republic. The décor, services, activities, and location provide a holistic environment that arguably meets Einstein’s criteria for dealing with challenging issues through a balance of body, mind, and spirit.<sup>18</sup> Chateau Mcely’s promise to its list of international clients such as Young Presidents Organization (YPO), Aspen Institute, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Google,

Lamborghini, Brown-Forman, Cisco Systems, Christian Dior, DHL, the European Union, Pfizer, and many others is consistently clear and focused: *“Our vision is to make a difference in the world by making a difference in yours.”*

Inez and I did not renovate Chateau Mcely simply to be in the hotel, spa, and restaurant businesses. Our strategy from the very outset was to create a “place” where the nexus and balance of body, mind, and spirit occur so naturally and seamlessly that it need not even be discussed or orchestrated. The “place” automatically produces highly desirable results. We have proven that Chateau Mcely can do just that as a successful commercial enterprise. If you page through the more than 1,000 pages in our current guestbook or read the comments on TripAdvisor,<sup>19</sup> you can see that a broad international demographic spectrum of guests seems to say the same thing over and over again, but in different words: “What incredible service; what marvelous food; a spa like no other; what a special place; I have felt something here that I have not experienced elsewhere.”

There are many fascinating stories throughout Chateau Mcely’s long history; some are perhaps mythical, some would even say mystical. Most allude to the castle’s special energy. There have been castles at this location since the fourteenth century and Celtic ruins dating back a few thousand years were discovered nearby several years ago. In our short experience since opening in 2006, we too have seen the unfolding of a number of interesting stories. One touching event occurred with our very first guests, an international meeting of the Young Presidents’ Organization (YPO). The members were all bright CEOs from a number of countries throughout the world. One of them was a young lady who is an investment banker in South Africa, where she lives as a single mom with her nine-year-old daughter.

Because she was going to be gone for some time on international travel, she bought her daughter a small puppy and told her not to let the puppy out of the compound where they live. At the time there were still significant remnants of Apartheid in their neighborhood. Our guest had been at Chateau Mcely for only a few hours when she received a call from her daughter in South Africa crying desperately that the puppy had escaped through the gate. It was so serious that the young banker was considering returning to South Africa in the morning to comfort her daughter.

That evening, as she dressed for dinner in her room, she noticed a statue of the Virgin Mary in our gardens. It was placed there to commemorate the famous Marian apparitions of the Virgin Mary to three young Mcely

children on our property in 1849, nine years before she is said to have appeared to fourteen-year-old Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France. As our guest looked down at the statue, she thought aloud in desperation, “Look, Mary, I’m Jewish and I don’t know much about you and your apparition here at Chateau Mcely, but if there is anything you can do for my little girl, I would be deeply grateful.” That evening she went to sleep, fully intending to book a return flight to South Africa in the morning. She was awakened at 3:30 a.m. by her daughter, who was as jubilant as can be. The security guard had found her puppy.

As part of our body-mind-spirit strategy, we recently launched Mcely Bouquet,<sup>20</sup> a collection of totally-natural skincare and spa products. These products were developed over a two-year period by Inez who worked closely with a cosmetic chemist, using ancient alchemical techniques. She has had a lifelong interest in natural cosmetics and aromatherapy. We set up a laboratory at Chateau Mcely for developing our products and for their manufacture. Initial response from the market has been very favorable, so we expect this effort to continue as an important part of our focus in the realm of body and spirit.

Inspired by the *Eloise* books written in the mid-1950s by Kay Thompson about a precocious little girl who lives at the Plaza Hotel in Manhattan, Inez is currently completing a book entitled *Nely, Princess of Mcely*.<sup>21</sup> The pictures in the book are beautifully drawn by a local Czech artist. The stories portray the imagination and actual games played in the castle and created by our six-year-old Julia. All of the *Eloise* books begin with, “I am Eloise. I am six. I am a city child. I live at the Plaza.” The *Nely* books have a similar sense, but are based on real exploits by a real six-year-old in a real castle. Inez is also working with local artisans to offer a number of *Nely* products, and is in the process of a completing a renovated suite at Chateau Mcely just for little princesses.

An integral part of our “mind” strategy has been to bring to Chateau Mcely recognized world experts who can teach and influence high-level corporate and political leaders to foster effective addressing of critical global issues such as climate change, energy security, and healthcare. The fundamental point here is creating a new kind of leadership—Conscious or inspired leadership—enlightened leaders, who naturally, unpresumptuously, and compassionately inspire those around them, and who are driven to serve all of their stakeholders, through their commitment to the “3-P Bottom Line”—People, Planet, Profit.

In doing so, the goal is to create inspiring visions, missions, and values that permeate and motivate every individual in their organization to create products and services that make this a better world. We are now implementing this next step of our strategy—bringing talented and proven experts in leadership and related areas to Chateau Mcely to help us make an even greater difference in the world. We call this the *Chateau Mcely Forum*<sup>TM,22</sup>. Our first program was successfully launched in June 2011 as *Leadership for Life*.<sup>23</sup> We brought to Prague and to Chateau Mcely Dr. Lance Secretan, a former CEO of Manpower Inc. and a world leader and the architect of the principles of Inspirational Leadership<sup>®</sup>.<sup>24</sup> His presence has had multiple positive impacts within the Czech Republic, and we continue to invite great thinkers such as Lance to Prague. Similar programs have followed and continue on a regular basis.

We think programs such as those offered by Chateau Mcely Forum are important to stimulate thinking as to how our world can safely and expeditiously transition to a new paradigm, a new way of “being.” The current paradigm based on excessive utilization of resources without regard to the impact on the environment and on the lives of others, may have worked since the inception of the industrial revolution, but it is now a very dangerous trajectory for the future of humanity.



There were a number of other critical crossroads in my life, junctures that determined my degree of personal fulfillment, my true meaning in life, my destiny. We all have them. Recognizing these decision points and taking appropriate action, guided by a “giant” who supports your emotional, spiritual, and intellectual growth is the secret to a meaningful life and a successful business.

As I will work diligently to show you in the pages that follow, once you determine that special skill that you were born with and you connect it with a positive need in the world, you will have found your life purpose. You will find that the passion you generate from this discovery will create incredible levels of emotional and physical energy. You will then have the wherewithal to proceed and persist with continual success and fulfillment along the way—not just as a final goal. From that point all that is required is tenacity, good judgment based on the counsel of the giants you meet along the way, and dedicated effort. You don’t have to be gifted with a special set

of genes or a super high IQ. *Everyone* is capable of achieving the success and happiness of a balanced life.

So this has been my professional life—so far! I am sometimes asked “How many more professional lives will you have?” or “What will the next one be?” I have no idea. My journey so far has been a gift beyond all my expectations. I am deeply grateful. And I would be more than happy to stay with No. 5; but I always keep my senses open to the universe and the giants I may meet along the way. You never know!

I am also asked quite often, “If you could go back in time, what would you change?” I must say that I am so satisfied with my current state in life that I would be hesitant to change anything, even the disappointments, lest it alter my much fulfilled overall existence. Yes, it is true that I’ve had my share of challenges. Jane’s death is certainly a vivid example. But in retrospect and after managing my transition to a new life, I can look back and say that the universe granted me the most incredible opportunity to grow with and love the two most magnificent women I have ever met. My love for Inez is as deep as I can fathom, and she has melded us even closer into “oneness” by giving birth to our bright, vibrant, and spirited young daughter Julia, the youngest of my three princesses—Doreen (age forty-six), Polly (age thirty-six), and Julia (age six). I am reminded constantly by these three lovely ladies that I must stay healthy and vital if I am to dance at Julia’s wedding!

I think you have to learn to manage the “mountains-of-challenge” in life to arrive at the “verdant-valleys-of-fulfillment.” And if you do it well, the rewards are remarkable. No one gets a free ride. And every stage in life builds on previous experiences. The Buddhists got it right—that’s just karma! I have never said that my successes happened *despite* the challenges I faced in life; rather, I am convinced that they happened *because* of these challenges. Surmounting obstacles has a way of teaching us truths we might never have uncovered, and opening doors that might never have been opened for us.

As you travel through this book, my hope is that for each chapter you read you will get at least one solid idea of value, something you can hang on to, something that touches your very heart and soul, something that will make a positive difference in your life.