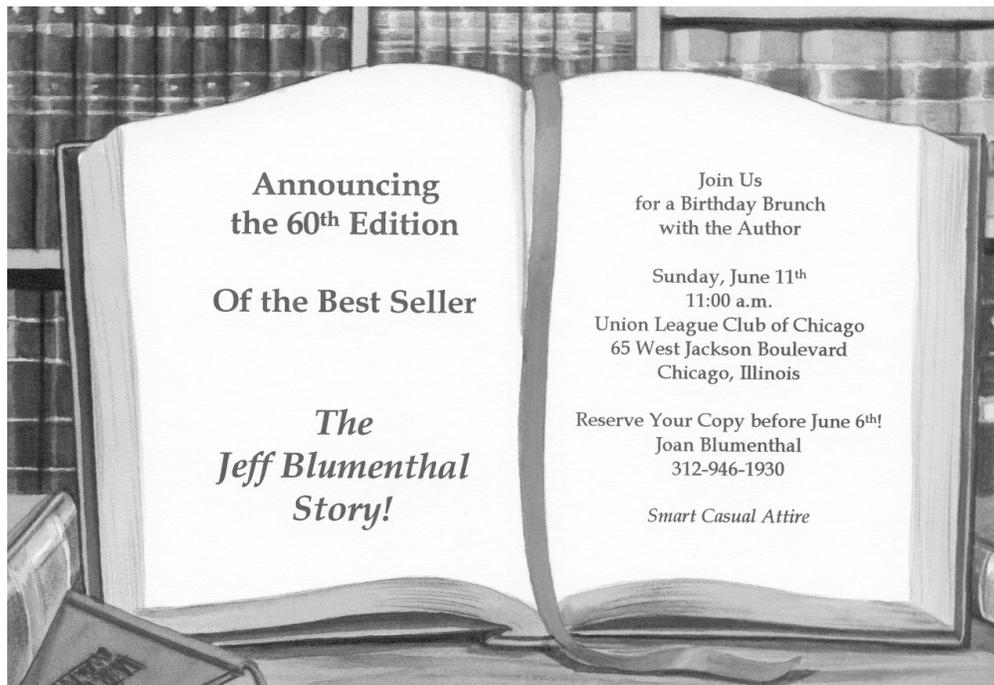


The Jeff Blumenthal Story

*Funny things happened to me on
the way to my 60th birthday.*



As told to his friends at The Union League Club of Chicago

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The 40's: How It All Started

June 12, 1940

It was dark and stormy on the night I was born in a log cabin on the Illinois prairie. The "cabin" was a brick and wood home on the northwest corner of Lakeside Place and Sheridan Road in Highland Park and there were probably too many trees to qualify as prairie. For those who need the precise facts, however, the actual site of my birth was Evanston Hospital. Highland Park in those days was still shedding its past as Port Clinton and the hospital had no maternity ward of consequence at the time. To hear my father describe it, we were at the northern outpost of civilization in the Chicago area. There was nothing between us and Hudson Bay except the frontier town of Highwood and Fort Sheridan to protect us. It was a few years later when I learned about Lake Forest, etc.

The home still stands today in a wooded section of town -- thanks to all the trees planted by my father. It was the first of many homes, all purchased in a matter of minutes or hours, but that's another story.

How I got my name

My given legal and full name is **Don Jeffrey Blumenthal**. My mother is especially fond of short names. "When your last name is Blumenthal, it gets too confusing to have a long first name," she would always say. With that in mind, I entered this world as Don. Within moments after I arrived, so did a telegram (they always deliver, even on dark and stormy nights). The fateful message was one conveying congratulations and best wishes for "Donald" and my parents. "Donald!," exclaimed my mom, "Why that's the name of a duck -- we're calling him Jeff."

So from that point on I have been Jeff to those who know me. To insurance salesmen and others who ply names from a list, it's Don. I have found this to be extremely useful in screening telephone calls long before caller id was invented.

In work situations, I usually sign my name as "D. Jeffrey Blumenthal." This usually results in people calling me "Doctor" in reverential tones. I seldom correct them. For those who insist, I simply say that I am a life-long Chicago resident -- my great grandfather was in the 1870 Chicago Census -- and that the "D" is just what it says, and that I am "Da' Jeffrey Blumenthal."

Elm Place School

In the Spring of 1945 we moved from the Ravinia section of Highland Park. I have vague memories of nursery school in the commercial section of Ravinia, Shelton's for hamburgers and ice cream, Dorsey Husenetter's hardware store, and Marcello Rolleri at the grocery store. I believe the real reason we moved were probably some nosey neighbors who complained about my mother taking me for long walks in the middle of blizzards and snowstorms using the theory that such exposure would condition me for whatever life would bring.

Our new digs were a 17 room tudor home on 2 acres on the southwest corner of Vine and Linden. We had lots of room, and we needed it. In addition to my older brother and sister, my grandfather lived with us. We had a full-sized attic and basement with recreation room. Lots of nooks and crannies to play and to setup various experiments, darkrooms, model train layouts, workshop, and whatever else a young boy needs to discover the world and himself.

My best friend lived across the street on Linden Avenue -- Hiram Wilder Kennicott, III. His father was a ham radio operator -- W9RBD -- and I had a keen interest in electronics. Right

after we moved in, I put a hairpin into an electrical outlet which burned my hand and damn near electrocuted me. It was an experience that molded my life in more ways than one. For all the years spent in grade school, Hiram and I were inseparable.

We even had a swimming pool, which was really unusual in those days. I was only three feet deep, kidney shaped, and surrounded by a narrow flagstone walk. In reality it was more like a water garden. One year we did use it as a pool, but the amount of work in painting it and the fact that it was located in a shady section of the yard, limited its use. Another year we set it up as a lily pond, complete with tadpoles and other decorative items. Early one Sunday morning we all heard a loud, blood curdling scream. By the time we had reached our windows to see what was the matter, all we could glimpse was the back end of Hiram running toward his house -- complete in his thoroughly drenched Sunday school suit. Everyone in the family had a good laugh but me. After all, he was my friend. Whenever I catch myself laughing at a person, I try to think back to the day Hiram fell into our pool.

One of the best things about this time in my life, in addition to a neat house, a friend, an exciting neighborhood of ravines, and the lake, was Elm Place School. I attended EPS from Kindergarten all the way through 8th Grade. Somewhere I have photos and mementos that I need to digitize and organize for the second edition of this book.

There are at least three remaining items to cover in this decade.

First, is that I was offered the choice of morning or afternoon kindergarten. I chose the afternoon. I am a morning person. It would have been natural if I had selected the morning session: get up early, go to school, and then have the rest of the day for fun. At the age of five I was starting to be a bit rebellious, however. Instead of selecting the morning session which would have suited me better, I opted for the afternoon session for the sole reason of avoiding the obligatory afternoon nap imposed upon me. I got my way, but wound up being sleep deprived. You never recover, and to this day I often have a hard time in the afternoon or after dinner. I should have taken those naps. Maybe I wouldn't have every sleep disorder known to man.

The second thing to note, is that I really felt dumb in first and second grades. I thought that I would never learn to read, write, or do arithmetic. By the time I left fifth grade, however, there was no question in my mind, or anyone else's for that matter, that I was good at math and science. My third grade teacher, Miss Dorsch, use to call me "Scientist Blumenthal" and got me reading and involved in all sorts of scientific pursuits. My fifth grade teacher, Mr. Zabka, got me straightened out in math. By the time I was ten years old I was confident about learning anything.

The third item from this period introduced me to the world of wine. My father had a friend named Henry Marcus. Henry had started a wine company with the label "BarLomA," an amalgamation of the first names of his children. The initial batches did not turn out too well and were condemned by the US Government. My father, who was not a marketing guy but nevertheless quite clever, got him to reposition the product with a new name and target audience. And so, Mogen David was launched. As a token of appreciation, Henry sent us a 5 gallon wooden cask of Mogen David wine which we prominently placed in the pantry between the kitchen and the dining room. On most nights we would all customarily enjoy a small glass of wine with dinner.

This was also the time before television, when radio had all the great programs: Captain Midnight and Tom Mix were my favorites. I was in the habit of listening to all of them in the time before dinner. My father enjoyed listening to the news while he ate breakfast, so the radio was strategically located in the same pantry as the keg of Mogen David. Well, as you can imagine, there I was innocently listening to the radio when I was overcome with an irresistible desire to have my glass of wine before dinner. One glass lead to another. When it

came time to pick my father up at the train station, I informed my mother that I couldn't because I was drunk. She simply laughed it off and took me by the hand toward the car. She said I felt awfully light. I got sick and by the time Dad got home, I was sleeping off my first "bender." I avoid Mogen David before dinner these days, but most of the other brands I like.

So I exited my first decade with a sense of humor, a love of learning, and the knowledge that life was too short for bad wine.



The 50's: Growing Up

Graduation from Elm Place School

By the time I was 10 years old, school was old hat. Summers were spent at Camp Wanaki in Cass Lake, Minnesota where I learned to swim, canoe, fish, and play all sorts of sports. Located on the headwaters of the Mississippi River, it gave me an appreciation of nature. The experience I remember most was a canoe trip to Cut Foot Sioux, on Winnibigoshish Lake. This particular trip had a reputation of being impossible to complete. The lake was very large and subject to high waves. It had not been successfully completed in as many years as anyone could remember. Well, to make a long story short, we paddled from Cass Lake down the Mississippi to Winnibigoshish. When we arrived the air was calm and the lake was smooth as glass. We paddled straight across to the inlet known as Cut Foot Sioux, named after an Indian battle. That night our luck changed. When we got up the next morning the wind was howling and the swells were enormous. We all learned to respect nature as we made our way around the lake back to the shelter of the river.

These were also a sad times. My brother, David, was killed in a traffic accident, and by the time I was in 8th Grade, our house held too many memories. When I graduated from EPS in 1954, we moved to another home. It was much smaller; a builder's spec house, nicely finished on the inside, but on a small lot with neighbors right on top of us. The location was just off Sheridan Road at Beech Street, with access to Lake Michigan. It was called Ravinoaks, which my father promptly renamed as Kreplach Lane and had a sign painted to that effect. This endeared him to a some of our neighbors, but few others really understood his sense of humor -- which I had begun to realize that I had inherited.

We spent about four years there while I was in high school. The proximity to the lake was great for parties and bonfires. I was once given a psychological questionnaire that asked if I had ever felt influenced by phases of the moon. Of course I answered in the affirmative. It was standard operating policy to only schedule beach parties when the moon was full to help people find their way along the path down to the lake. Doing it any other time would have been crazy. I still love moonlit nights, and probably do pay attention the phases of the moon.

My first tuxedo

It was my 14th birthday. I had just graduated from Elm Place School and was looking forward to starting high school that fall. Dad and I were working in the backyard of our new home on Ravinoaks Lane. We were talking about growing up, my birthday, and the transition from grade school. All of a sudden he began talking about how I would find myself in new types of social situations with the need to respond appropriately. There was something I would require, he told me, to prepare for these certain occasions. He asked me to clean up and that we would head into town. I thought we were going to Walgreen's to buy condoms, instead he took me to Fell's and bought me a tuxedo. He never wanted me to turn down an invitation to a formal dance simply because it would be too inconvenient to rent a tux. By owning my own tuxedo, I could accept any invitation at the drop of a hat. I have always owned a tuxedo since that day, and have worn them a dozen or more times a year -- a lot more than I can say about condoms.

LFA / Hockey

I am a preppie. My parents were adamant about not sending me to Highland Park High School. It was a direct aftereffect from my brother's death. Although I was slightly ambivalent at first about the thought of not attending the local school with my friends, it took only a few days at The Lake Forest Academy -- LFA -- to convince me that this was the right choice. It was not a school for incorrigible teens. Instead I found myself in small classes with

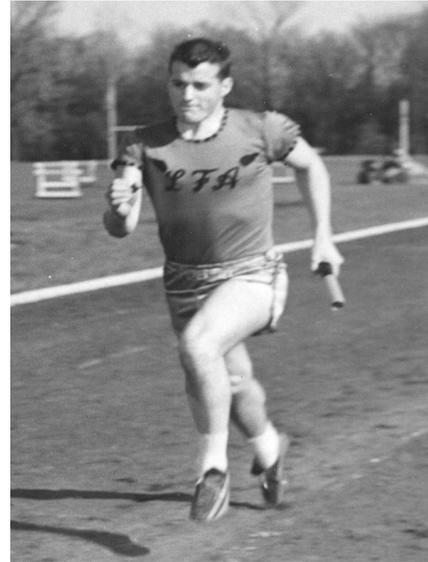
very bright classmates and the ability to get instruction in just about any subject -- my German class had only three students and I took German for three years. I got to wear my tuxedo. We had a dress code of coat and tie every school day, chapel every morning, freshmen beanies, and a host of other "traditions" that make all other rules and regulations irrelevant.

There was also the opportunity to play on any athletic team you desired. Even if you weren't very good you still got to play. With our conference of private schools being so small, you could even be a star. I lettered in football and even won the conference track 440 yard dash. Not bad for a guy with short legs! Hockey, however, was a different story. Exposure to all those harsh winter elements paid off, and I was a good skater. I played varsity hockey all four years and was Captain my Junior year. We won almost all of our games, but considering that we had no artificial ice, but had to rely on nature, we didn't really play all that much. Never the less, the local papers usually covered our events, and my father used to gloat a bit to his friends on the commuter train into Chicago.

One of these fellow commuters was Gene Hotchkiss, a rabid Dartmouth alum. I had applied to and had been accepted by both Cornell and Stanford, but Gene would not let my father alone. He insisted that I apply to Dartmouth. To help my father appease Gene Hotchkiss, I submitted an application. Within a few days my hockey coach called me into his office and asked me what I was doing with an application to Dartmouth. I told him the full story. He made me pledge that I would not accept any invitation from Dartmouth. He was anxious to impress upon them the quality of the LFA hockey program. Evidently he did a great job, because within short order, an offer of a scholarship was in the mailbox. In truth, I was a good player, but much of that was built upon my ability to skate backwards as fast as many could going forward.

Our headmaster was a New Englander and wanted LFA to be every bit as good as any eastern prep school. All sorts of activities promoted this vision. Robert Frost came to LFA for one week to read his poetry, talk to students, and teach a few classes. We had visitors from all over the world. Norman Ross came to speak once, and when he found out that I had applied to Stanford, we struck up an acquaintance that still lasts today -- we share the same seats at the Lyric Opera on different nights and joke about it whenever we meet.

It was at LFA that I learned to write after much prodding from several masters. I also learned to love music of all kinds through a job as an usher at the Ravnia Festival. During high school I held several jobs in the summer -- from shipping clerk to laboratory technician. By the time I graduated in 1958, it was time to leave home.



The 60's:

Cornell and Stanford

Because my experience with the hairpin inserted into an electrical outlet had convinced me that I had to become an electrical engineer, I applied to both Cornell and Stanford. My sister was a Stanford graduate and I had visited the campus. She was living on the West Coast and my parents had expressed a desire to move out to California one day. It was only natural that I apply. Cornell was another story. Located in the middle of nowhere, I had never seen the campus. To their credit, they admitted me early. As a result I thought a lot about Cornell, and eventually reasoned that if I did my undergraduate work at Cornell I could do my graduate work at Stanford, and be out on the West Coast when my dad wanted to retire. Clearly my future as a long range planner was already in the works.

I entered the electrical engineering program in the fall of 1958. After only a few semesters I realized that I was never going to need or use information about electrical power generation and all the other stuff that double-E's learned. Instead I was attracted to the Engineering Physics program which was a small, elite group taking all sorts of math and physics courses. Trevor Cuykendahl, dean of the program, told me, "Jeff, I don't know what you may be doing ten, twenty, or even thirty years from now, but I want to assure you that Engineering Physics will prepare you to do it!" Thirty years later I wondered if he had ever considered the used book business as a possibility.

I joined the Kappa Sigma fraternity, spent my holidays in New York City, and played intramural hockey. There was no way I could have made the Cornell hockey team. Ken Dryden who later played with the Montreal Canadiens was the second string goalie at the time. A few summers I worked as I had in high school, but on a couple of occasions I went to summer school.

The Cornell EP program was very intensive. We took 5-6 courses each semester, and there were few electives. In spite of my love for the program, I needed an escape. One summer I took Chinese Art History and Economics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. I lived at the Kappa Sig house on Lake Mendota. Another summer I took a total immersion Russian course, and then there was the German Literature class. To get a break from the academic side, I drove out to Sunnyvale, California and lived with Jack and Sheila, my brother-in-law and sister. I spent my time selling waterless cookware door to door or consuming the brews of the world at Googie's Hofbrau House on El Camino. When I returned home, my mother invited a bunch of her friends over for one of my demonstrations. I sold several sets.

I graduated reasonably high up in the overall engineering class, but with only 30 students in engineering physics, my class ranking was nothing to write home about. I was particularly proud of the fact that I had cleverly avoided taking a course in the new field of digital computing. Who would ever want to be a computer programmer?

True to form, I was accepted at Stanford in Electrical Engineering -- it was part of the long-range plan. At the graduate level you could take all the math and statistics courses you wanted. Since Cornell was a five year program, it took only one year for me to earn the MSEE degree. Unfortunately, however, I could not escape the computer programming class, so I spent 10 weeks learning Assembler for the IBM 7090 and ALGOL for the Bouroughs 4000. Programming was behind me, or so I thought.

I was offered a research assistantship for one year after my masters. This gave me a small salary and free tuition. I shared an office with about 8 other students. (One of them wound up becoming Dean of the School of Engineering at Cornell, but that's another story.) One day I was busily calculating some Poisson statistics for a quantum communication channel

calculation. One of my office mates noticed what I was doing and asked why I wasn't using a computer to perform the calculations. I politely told him to shut up and let me finish. He persisted, and finally I told him that I wasn't going to walk over to the other side of campus, punch a deck of cards for the 4000 and wait an hour for it to turn around, probably with errors. He replied that I should indeed forget about the 4000 on the other side of campus and instead use the IBM 1620 next door which used FORTRAN. I told him I didn't know FORTRAN. He did, and volunteered to write it for me. He did so in short order and I had the results in 30 minutes. I noticed that I had selected a set of parameters that were probably not realistic and requested a re-write. He balked and handed me the FORTRAN manual to read. I took it home that evening and by noon the next day was hooked on using computers to compute things. I'm one of the few people left who still uses a computer to compute.

GTE/Sylvania Electronic Defense Systems

When my one year as a research assistant ran out, I still wanted to take more courses. I had developed a keen interest in statistical communication and control systems, and there seemed no end to the field. Long before it became the Silicon Valley, the region was well populated with technology and defense contractors. Finding a job was simple. So, armed with a Bachelor of Engineering Physics and Master of Science in Electrical Engineering Degrees and additional I took a job with Sylvania -- not the light bulb plant, but the defense contractor. My salary was \$750/month. They even agreed to keep paying my tuition at Stanford. So I continued to keep taking more and more courses. Eventually I entered a new program called Engineering-Economic Systems which was part Operations Research, part Business School, and part Engineering.

I never really did any electrical engineering, although I was always fascinated with electronics. My real love was statistics and modeling. I should have guessed it since my Master's thesis was a statistical model of suicides from the Golden Gate Bridge.

My job at Sylvania involved electronic countermeasures and estimation of electronic warfare capabilities. I would take fragments of data and observations and turn them into statistical estimates of threats.

I held a Top Secret clearance and worked inside of a giant steel and concrete safe. I could never tell anyone what I did or who my sponsoring clients were. On the other hand, we would often have visits from a client and it would be my job to entertain them in the evening. Even then I was becoming a good "schmoozer" among the engineering crowd. Sylvania needed an expense report to document these expenses for reimbursement. I couldn't use anyone's real name. One of the clients spoke with a slight German accent when he spoke at all, and the other had the personality of a dead fish. My solution was to invent two people: Herman Glibrig and Al Salmon. Creativity with expense reports is an art I learned at Sylvania, and very valuable in the world of business.

Another lesson learned at that time was the inflexibility of computers and how they could really screw up things on a scale here-to-fore unimagined. While doing an assignment at Two Rock Ranch, an Army radio listening station near Petaluma, California, I was introduced to Lieutenant Azerinski who was my point man among other duties, such as ordering supplies for the post. Although he dutifully entered 100 into a punched card, he left justified it in the field. As a result the post at Two Rock Ranch, consisting of 250 men, received a 10,000 pound shipment of dried pinto beans.

Marriage

One of these days I will write another book entitled, "My Life With Joan." In these pages I will describe how we met and our wedding, and leave the hike to Budd Lake for another book.

If it wasn't for a computer, we would have never met. In the mid-sixties computers were becoming a part of everyday life. "Don't fold, spindle, or mutilate," were familiar words to everyone. A dating, introduction service called Operation Match promised to use the power of the computer to find the person of your dreams. I won't go into the details, but leave it said that the results from my standpoint were disappointing. After a few contacts it seemed like the dreams were more like nightmares. Could it be that Azerinski was involved in keypunching the data? None of the parameters seemed to match up, except for sex which is quite amazing considering we were in San Francisco.

At this time I would hang out with a group of fellow Stanford graduate students. For one of them, the results were better, in fact Roy and Rena had become an item. She was a student at San Jose, and Roy knew the way. They dated regularly and we doubled several times. Roy would mention Rena's roommate, Joan, but nothing else. Joan has told me since, that Rena had mentioned Roy's friend, Jeff, "But you two would have nothing in common."

We would have been destined to never meet if it hadn't been for a faulty distributor in Roy's car. It had broken down in San Jose and I offered to come down a help out. After fooling around for a hour or two and getting the car taken care of, it was getting late that Sunday afternoon, February 6, 1966. Roy suggested that we head over to Rena's a sponge a dinner.

I met Joan. She was wearing jeans and a blue bandana, sewing a wedding gown costume for a nursery school class she was student teaching. Clearly they were not ready for two hungry guys for dinner, but Joan said that if she could go to the store, we could get something for dinner. Since I had the car, off we went to Safeway. On the way we discovered that we, indeed, have some commonality in terms of food choices (liver and onions), but it was at the market where I really impressed her. I offered to buy the wine. Instead of opting for the Red Mountain jug, I selected a Cabernet Sauvignon from Paul Masson Vineyards at \$1.49 a bottle. This was 50 cents more than the standard Paul Masson, but after all, I had learned about good wine in the 1940's.

We had dinner, watched "The Three Faces of Eve" on TV, and said goodnight. It was love at first sight for both of us. We dated a couple of times, and I popped the question. We were married on August 21st of that year -- but not without a few problems!

Although I had some religious upbringing, to certain members of Joan's family I was not the typical SWJM. My father was born in Navasota, Texas where he claimed the number of Jews was so small that you couldn't even get a good poker game going let alone form a minyan. My mother is Swedish. According to matriarchal Jewish tradition, I wasn't Jewish. Not true! I went to Sunday School and was confirmed, but I did not have any interest in being Bar Mitzvah. In many respects I was somewhat ignorant of many of the customs and traditions. Believe it or not, the very first Jewish wedding ceremony I would ever attend would be my own.

Wolli Kaelter, the rabbi who would perform the ceremony in Long Beach, California, always spent time in the summer at the Monterrey Music Festival in northern California. He had big, round eyes, was totally bald, and a very mild, comforting voice. He also had a creed: Rehearsals are for idiots. Over the course of a few meetings that summer, he described the ceremony and our roles. At one point toward the end of the ceremony I would be handed a cup of wine. I was to offer it to Joan and then to take back the cup, and by the way, the ceremonial Kiddush cup would be his gift to us. At the end of the ceremony I would break a small glass object with my heel. "And don't make a scene of it," he instructed. Enough said.

August 21, 1966 was a very hot, still day in Long Beach. Rabbi Kaelter, Joe Hartstein (Joan's father), my father, and I were in the rabbi's study with the window open. People were beginning to arrive. We were just chatting. I am not sure how it came up, but Joe made a remark about "Tricky Dick" Nixon. My father calmly asked him if the comment indicated a

particular political persuasion. Joe replied that both he and Ruth were life-long Democrats. My father got up from his chair, walked calmly toward the window, and shouted to the strangers on the street, "Go home. It's off -- they're Democrats." With that said he returned to his chair and sat down. Joe had a look of astonishment on his face, but the rabbi's jaw was open wide and his eyes were as large as saucers. After what probably seemed like an eternity my dad and I started laughing uncontrollably. As I have said, the Blumenthal sense of humor takes a bit of getting used to.

As the ceremony began, Joan appeared at the end of the aisle. It was one of the few times she wasn't wearing a St. John, and she looked great. Remembering back over all these years it still takes my breath away.



At age 7, Joan's youngest brother, Allen, was our ring bearer. Understandably he was nervous standing in front of all the people, and the sanctuary was hot with no movement of air. Suddenly, he began to sway back and forth. My best man caught him in mid-air, sat him down in the first row, and fished the ring from the pillow. Most thought it was part of the ceremony, but Joan was shaken and kept whispering, "How's Allen?"

As we neared the end of the ceremony the Kiddush Cup, filled to the brim with a red wine of distant memory to the time when I was seven years old, was handed to me. As instructed months ago, I handed it to Joan. She handed it straight back to me, the first and only time I have seen her pass up at least one taste of wine in all the years we have known one another.

So, there I am, holding a cup of red wine. I stared at the meniscus. It was so full a loud cough would have sent it spilling onto the white carpet beneath my feet. I looked at the cup. It was a beautiful copper piece with a glass insert holding the wine. The glass object, I reasoned. This was the glass object I was going to stomp on in just a few moments. I convinced myself that the only thing standing between the full cup of wine and an ugly mess on the white carpet was me. I took a deep breath, lowered my head, and began a chug-a-lug of the entire goblet, tipping my head backward as I progressed. As my head tipped back my eyes were again treated Rabbi Kaelter's gaze. Only this time, his eyes appeared to be the size of serving platters, not saucers. When I finished, a round of applause went up, probably from one part of my family, and Joan's great-aunt Anna Farrell who probably thought the goblet was filled with Jim Beam.

I did finally break a glass object in a dignified and refined manner. I later learned that it was a small light bulb -- they make a nice pop when crushed. The Kiddush Cup, the rabbi's gift, still has the original glass insert, and occupies a prominent location on a shelf in our home. Rehearsals are for idiots, but you have to be prepared for "out of the cup drinking."

We honeymooned in Mexico City, but that will be part of the next book. Rena was right, we did not have a lot in common. What we did have, however, was a respect for each other's interests. We never feel obligated to spend each minute together like Siamese twins. At parties and social events we often double our coverage of the room by splitting up and converging later to compare notes. Over the years we have developed common interests. Perhaps best of all, she still laughs at my jokes after thirty plus years.

I invented the Internet at BB&N

Al Gore is mistaken. As part of my studies at Stanford, my advisor convinced me to take a leave of absence from Sylvania and go to Cambridge, Massachusetts to do a project at Bolt Baranek & Newman. So, Joan and I stored our wedding presents, packed up the stick shift Nash Rambler station wagon and headed off towards Boston about the time Havlicek was stealing the ball and Carl Yastremski was hitting home runs. We fell in love with the town. Joan landed a full time Home Ec teaching position, while I worked at BB&N.

My job was to develop a plan for a commercial time sharing service based around the Scientific Data Systems SDS 940 computer. As we projected the growth in service, we needed to address the ability to have more than one computer and to handle geographically dispersed users. Part of our funding came from the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA). Later the government dropped the defense part, and the rest is history. I don't ever remember meeting Al Gore, but most of the staff at BB&N was very bright. Anxious to finish up my schooling, we left after six months.

It was a good thing. We learned to cook by watching Julia Child and preparing what she demonstrated. Conveniently, we lived behind the Star Market just down the street from her house. Additionally, we ate enough baked stuffed lobster to keep us happy. Joan's Aunt Bernice who lived in Boston, also plied us with freshly baked apple pies. With all this eating, we would occasionally spill a drop or two on our clothing which would necessitate a trip to the cleaners. When we realized how much they were shrinking our clothes, it was time to go on a diet and enjoy a healthier California lifestyle.

Since it was early Spring, we elected to drive back via the southern route stopping off in New York City, Washington, DC, Dallas, Phoenix, and all intermediate stops.

When we returned, I went back to Sylvania. Things were not right. I needed a change. I was not comfortable doing Top Secret defense work, and I was approaching my tenth year of college. I wrote up my non-classified results from experiments I had run at Sylvania and had analyzed at BB&N, and submitted them to the Engineering-Economic Systems department. Because of the applied nature of the work (and probably some politics), I was awarded the Engineer's Degree -- the practical man's Ph.D.

I now had school behind me, with only one other step to take. I reasoned that I was now too smart and practical to work at Sylvania, so I quit my job and became a consultant. My business cards and letterhead proclaimed "Modeling and Analysis of Complex Decisions." I had my photo taken. Finally, I bought lunch for a reporter at the Palo Alto Times and an article appeared within days.

Then I received a phone call. The Chairman of a new consulting company had seen the article and forwarded it to the president. He called and asked if I could come to their offices in Berkeley and meet his partner, Carl.



A new phase of my life was about to begin. During a seminar at Stanford I was asked what I would like to do once I graduated. I had replied, "Have some fun and make a few bucks -- not necessarily in that order."

The 70's: Family, Community, Work

On-Line Decisions

The new consulting company was On-Line Decisions, and strategically located halfway between Peoples Park and the Berkeley Police Station. Yes, this was the time of unrest, and yes, the smell of tear gas permeated the offices just about every afternoon. On-Line Decisions was established to provide software and consulting for firms that wished to construct models written in FORTRAN and run on the SDS 940 computer. It just so happened that I knew something about that.

After a short chat with the bearded Jim Boulden, President, I was introduced to the "brains" of the outfit, Dr. Carl Noble, a Ph.D. in high energy physics, turned model builder. We had a lot in common and became friends immediately. After a little discussion, we agreed on a working arrangement for me to work on one of the firm's newest and largest clients: Potlatch Forest Corporation. This was on a Thursday. They really didn't have much in the way of documentation, and I was handed one and one-half pages of scribbled notes describing the project, the model logic, and the instructions for the system they were using to operate the models on the XDS 940 -- all in one and one-half pages. I was to study this over the weekend. I could have memorized the whole thing in 15 minutes. Because I lived in Menlo Park, Carl in the East Bay, and Potlatch located in downtown San Francisco, we agreed that the best plan would be to converge at Potlatch, Monday morning at 9:00 am in the Alcoa Building where we would proceed up to the 23rd floor and meet Bill Chandler, our Potlatch contact.

The instructions are long and detailed for a reason. I have gone over them many times, again and again. I got up early that Monday, put on my best suit, and headed up the Bayshore Freeway to San Francisco. I had no trouble parking in the Alcoa Building. I was early, of course, since that is an inherited trait of the Blumenthal's going back many generations. I waited until 9:00 am, but no Carl. Thinking that I might have misunderstood the instructions, I headed to the 23rd floor. There was no receptionist, just two locked doors. My heart sank. My first customer, and I was in trouble. All of a sudden one of the doors opened and out stepped a big (around) fellow wearing a white shirt with cuff links, and no jacket. With a big smile and friendly handshake he introduced himself as Bill Chandler and assumed that I was the "new guy" to work on the project. He told me that Carl was delayed, and that we would start. Start we did. Questions, answers, more questions, review of data, and explanations about how the company worked -- time flew. It was Thursday before Carl showed up, and then it was only for a few minutes. In retrospect, this was the best training I ever received and would highly recommend the process for all new employees.

My future book on management will cover On-Line Decisions, later Planmetrics, in more detail. I started out as a consultant and shortly thereafter purchased a small amount of stock and became a full-time employee.

Menlo Park / Tiburon, CA

Since our marriage less than four years earlier, Joan and I had lived in Palo Alto, Cambridge, and now Menlo Park. Since I was working steadily, perhaps it was time to buy a home. Because I spent my time between San Francisco and Berkeley, one option was Marin County, north of the Golden Gate Bridge. After a bit of searching we found a small home overlooking a portion of the Bay in Tiburon. You could hear the fog horns on the bridge. It was the smallest, least expensive place in town. The only drawback was the weekend tourist traffic. It was an easy drive to the East Bay over a lightly traveled bridge, a ferry boat ride to San Francisco, and a short jaunt to the wine country. The day that we first landed a man on the moon, found Joan and I painting the interior of the house. It had been rented for a while and

was in poor condition, but it was ours. We felt very lucky, but that feeling didn't last very long.

While living in Menlo Park, Joan had fallen and injured her back. Traction wasn't working and it looked like surgery would be inevitable. My sister had gone on vacation and asked if I could watch her cat. I agreed, but didn't know that the cat was also pregnant. We had just adopted a beagador -- a combination beagle and labrador named Harvey who had a habit of roaming. Joan had suffered another miscarriage, now numbering in the double digits, but we were in line for an adoption within a month. I was travelling constantly. There was also another cloud on the horizon -- On-Line was running out of cash.

That problem was solved by Inland Steel of Chicago with a \$1.4 million investment, but that put a number of other things in motion. With the investment came a new president. With a new president came a strategy of opening more offices: Chicago, New York, Houston, Los Angeles, and ...

With more offices came the need to send experienced personnel to help train and develop business. They made me an offer I couldn't refuse. I would move to Chicago. We had moved so many times, that we didn't give it another thought.

So, seven months after moving in, we got ready to move again. Joan went down to stay with her family and have the much needed operation on her back. At the time I had to put on her stockings since she couldn't bend over more than a few degrees. The mother cat was long since returned to my sister, but we had the litter. Some were given away, but the rest, along with Harvey went down to Long Beach. After this, I could never complain about my mother-in-law.

With that done, I went off to work. In addition to Chicago, I was also helping setup our Houston office. My commute was Chicago-Houston-LA with a few side trips thrown in for good measure.

Village of Deerfield

Because I was born and raised (in a log cabin) in the Chicago area, I was a natural for the office here. We had moved so many times that I looked at a dozen or so homes on my own and bought one in Deerfield. I described it as best I could to Joan. Based on our track record, we'd be moving again within 18 months. It turned out to be a little longer than we thought.

Because of my extensive travel schedule, Deerfield was the ideal choice. I could take the train downtown, and O'Hare was readily accessible by car, bus, or taxi. Before the buildup of traffic on the toll road, I could leave my house one hour before flight time, drive to the airport, park, and be at the gate with time to spare.

As our stay in Deerfield became longer and longer we slowly but surely got involved in community activities. Joan was always interested in politics, and with her great networking skills she was working all sides. My book on the political intrigue of Lake County will cover my election to the Deerfield Village Board.

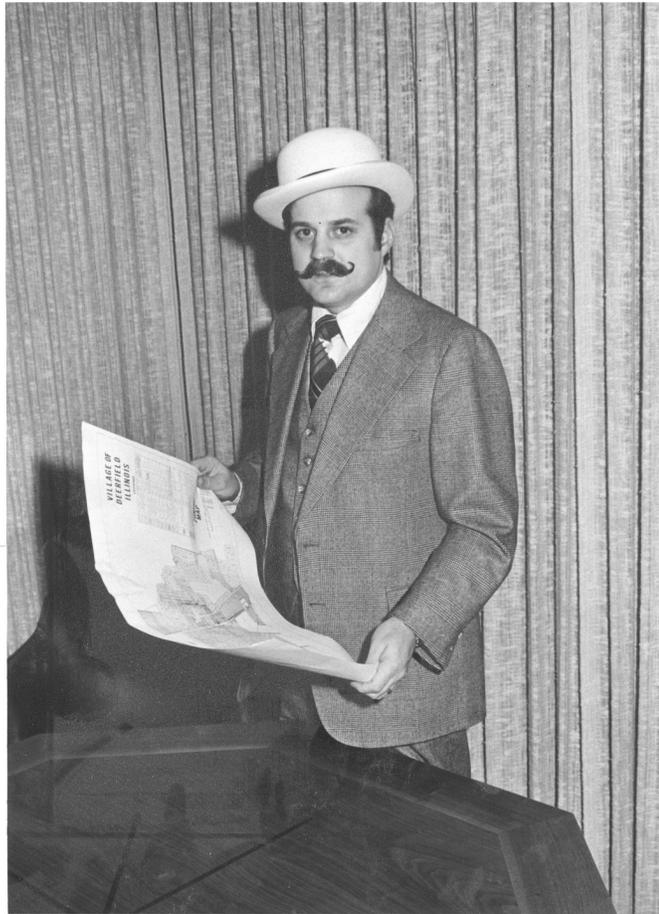
I was known as "the good guy in the white hat." It was during this period in my life when I realized I had a hat collection. Up until then, it was merely a large number of hats on a shelf in the closet. Our home on Peachtree Lane, however, had an entire room dedicated to the collection. When I bought the coat hooks needed to hang much of the collection, the store clerk asked me what school I worked for and couldn't believe that they were for my home.

Family

Deerfield and the 70's was the basis for our family. Both of our children: Andy born in 1970, and Marianne born in 1972 are adopted, and grew up in Deerfield. We always ate together as a family in the dining room. We had fixed up the room with molding, chair rails, and other treatments so that it was very elegant. Dinner was by candlelight, augmented by a nice wine, and accompanied by Carl Haas' Adventures in Good Music in the background. We had wonderful discussions around our dining room table.

We always tried to raise our children to think and do independently. In that spirit, I'll let them write their own stories about these experiences.

Seldom do I look back and regret how things have progressed. I'm too future oriented. On the other hand, my thoughts of these days are often accompanied by the wish that they could have lasted a lot longer. I called this section on the 70's, "Family, Community, and Work," ordering them by perceived degree of importance. Sometimes upon reflection I think Andy wasn't the only one to suffer from dyslexia.



Pet Computer

By 1978, On-Line Decisions had changed its name to Planmetrics to better reflect the role that we played in strategy and planning. We had developed a reputation of being the firm for modeling utility companies. I was Vice President of the Forecasting Practice doing load and energy forecasts, rate design, and preparation of testimony for regulatory hearings. There were approximately 200 gas and electric utility companies in the United States, and I have done work in one capacity or another for almost 40 of them. I was growing weary of the sameness in the work and running for airplanes.

This was also the time when computing was changing. The Intel 8008 processor was out, and the 8080 was on the way. The 940 was no longer king of time sharing, and in fact, Carl Noble and I pretty much saw the end of expensive time sharing. Inland Steel no longer felt its investment was strategic and wanted to sell. ESOPs and LBOs were the rage. It was an opportunity for me to sell my stock and go out on my own.

As a going away present, I was given a Commodore PET computer. Within a few weeks I had gotten into the operating system and had discovered some areas for improvement based on my knowledge of the processor. It just so happened that the company that wrote the system was located in Albuquerque and I had a client, Public Service of New Mexico, there as well. On my next trip I telephoned the company.

The phone rang and rang. Finally, someone sounding about five years old answered. I explained about how the chip for the PET would work better if certain variables were stored in low memory for faster access and improvements that would make the BASIC operating system better suited for commercial applications.

The voice at the other end of the phone started arguing with me almost immediately. "The 6052 is dead. The PET is a dead end machine. We're not making any improvements. Buy better technology." I could not believe my ears. After a few exchanges I finally called him a jerk. He reciprocated, and we both hung up. That was the last time I talked with Bill Gates.

The 80's: On My Own

The Jeffrey Corporation

For this second time on my own, I was determined to operate a bit longer than one week before going to work for a client. Instead of a sole proprietorship, we incorporated, had a logo designed, and rented an office complete with answering service. People have asked me about "going into consulting." Quite often, this is camouflage for "I've been laid off and can't find a job." I have a stock answer to those inquiries. First, you need to have at least one client. I guess you call that proof of concept. Second, you need to understand how you are going to make money.

There are two ways to make money in the consulting. You either keep a bunch of other people busy or keep yourself busy. It is difficult to impossible to do both. If you try to do both, you spend time marketing (without revenue), followed by working (with revenue). As a result you swing back and forth. I learned this with the Jeffrey Corporation from experience in all aspects. At times it was a painful lesson.

On one project I had four people writing a system for Activity Based Costing. It provided a great source of revenue, but unfortunately the client ran out of money and I wound up making the last payroll payments out of my own pocket. It put a dent in my earnings to say the least. So, you not only need to keep other people busy, but you need more than one project.

Ultimately I settled into a mode working as a sub-contractor. I always like doing the hands on part, and most of the time I had two projects going simultaneously.

The part I enjoyed the most, however, was the wide range of projects. I was still a business economist building simulation models, but one day it would be x-ray machine manufacturing, the next day construction equipment. Business was lousy, which was good for me. I developed a practice for business turn-arounds, i.e. companies in trouble that needed to get back on track. During the eight years I operated the Jeffrey Corporation I really learned about business operations, manufacturing, and distribution -- not just the financial side.

In spite of my attempts to maintain a steady and balanced life between work and family, we had our ups and downs. There were times when I was too busy to take a vacation, and others when I felt too poor. To provide a place to get away at a moments notice, we bought a small, year around second home in Abbey Springs on Lake Geneva. It allowed us to be a family.

After eight years, however, once again I succumbed and went to work for a client. The real problem in consulting is dealing with total implementation. You get to work on parts of the problem, not solve the big picture puzzle.

Teaching

During this period I also did some teaching. My first experience was a few years at Northwestern University's J.L. Kellogg School of Management -- both on the Evanston campus and downtown. There's something about teaching that causes you to re-learn your subject. My course was on simulation models. I could never find the right text, so eventually I wrote my own.

My next teaching assignment was at the Lake Forest Graduate School of Management which is an executive type program. I taught the next to the last course on strategic planning. That was fun, except for grading papers in what is essentially a qualitative situation. Another course I taught was in quantitative methods. I was "instructed" by the school to devote one-half of the course to statistical methods. The other half was up to me. A previous instructor

had devoted that half to linear programming. There is a real gap between academia and reality at times, and I wasn't about to make that mistake. I would have preferred to avoid statistics as well. For some people, numbers and quantitative techniques aid in the understanding of a system or process. For most others, even simple equations evoke math anxiety and make everything more complicated. I was never able to figure out a way to make quantitative methods a course to be enjoyed and valuable.

Because of my travel schedule, I wound up teaching on Saturday. It proved too difficult to continue.

The 90's: Corporate Organization Man

Follett Corporation

As this is being written, I am an employee of Follett Corporation. I can, however, be completely candid in my remarks. More details will appear in my book entitled "Follett: The Business, The Family, The Reality." That is, if I ever get enough time to finish it. Right now I'm too busy.

I went to work for Follett because I saw the opportunity to become involved from start to finish in a position of responsibility. That's pretty much a consultant's dream. Even though they were a small company, lord knows they have their share of issues ranging from operational to strategic.

I started out in one of their distribution divisions, which made me feel right at home after all my turn-around projects for manufacturing and distribution companies. At the time I joined, the division was a real shirt-sleeved operation with everyone doing what was needed, including going out on student buybacks. For those who don't know, a buyback is where you go onto a college campus and buyback certain textbooks from students using cash. I have done many of them and have to admit that it is probably the best way to get a perspective on today's student and their attitude toward books and teaching.

Every buyer usually becomes flummoxed when given a Bible for buyback -- the guide is arranged by author. On another occasion, I had a student lay down an expensive text in front of me with the words, "It's never been used." I thought he was just angling for a better price and asked him if he had the grades to prove it. Unfortunately it was the professor who required the text and then never referred to it in the course. Then there was the "The Young Catholics Guide to Sex," from the Marist Press, but that's another story.

After my work in the division, I had the honor of working for two Chairmen of the Board on matters of strategy. At the Corporate office there is plenty of flexibility to participate in industry groups and gain a perspective that one does not get from myopically following every customer move. You also learn the difference between respect and authority.

All I know about education, publishing, eBooks, eCommerce, etc., I learned at Follett. I have been with them longer than any other job experience. It is difficult to comment on the edge of history, so give me another year or two so I can put this decade into perspective.

Now my family, that's another story. They have been with me for a long time, including Mom.



The 00's: Not The Final Chapter

Dot.com Guy

With the new millennium we find ourselves living downtown in a high-rise condominium, enjoying a beautiful view, and taking in all that Chicago has to offer. A workout program has me in the best condition I have been in for many years. To go along with this, I now wear black shirts and have my cell phone clipped to my belt and Palm in my pocket. I look "with it."

I am also keeping my skill set current with all the work on eBooks, digital delivery of content, and the web.

Last, and certainly not least, I am thinking outside of the box -- way outside.

I cannot write about this chapter as it is yet to unfold. My goal in life is still pretty much the way I stated it thirty years ago -- have some fun and make a few bucks. I was a part of the micro-computer scene as it happened. I'm not about to watch the Internet revolution from the sidelines.

Stay tuned! I'm not sure just what it is I am going to do, but I am confident that Engineering Physics will have prepared me to do it.

Epitaph

What should be my epitaph? It's much too soon to be talking about this, given the way I feel. I am leaning toward, "He died laughing." I am open to suggestions.

Meanwhile let me divide my time between having some fun and making a few bucks while wearing my latest tuxedo.

