

November 4, 2015

## **PASS IT ON**

### Life's Important Lessons

Recently, September 2, 2015, I had my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party. One of the people that could not attend was Jake Stuart. Jake recently met me on the deck behind the University Club and asked me, what was the most important event in my life that I could relate to him, since he was not able to be at the party.

After thinking about this for a while, I decided to prepare this document.

Mary Jane, Diane, Lee & I left LaCross, Wisconsin, January 15, 1964, for Orlando, Florida. We were very fortunate in that we drove and there was no snow due to the "January thaw". Upon arriving in Orlando, I was assigned to the brand new Trane Dealer Program (TDP). Besides selling air handlers, centrifugal and reciprocating chillers, while I was resting, I had the responsibility of developing a dealer network. Trane was noted for large commercial equipment, but not residential.

One of the first dealers that I signed up was KC Air Conditioning, and the President was Charlie Draper. From 1964 through 1977, every time I would see Charlie, he would ask me "When are you going to start your own business?"

Everyone in my family had been employees, had always worked for other people and other companies. The goal in the 30's and 40's was to get on with a large company and after 40 + years, you would retire. When I went to work for the Trane company, I was to a commissioned salesman. You "ate what you killed". This was unheard of in my family. I know my mother and father must have thought I was crazy! Here they had helped me get this college education as an engineer, and here I am going out to work as a salesman!

In 1975 Charlie asked me again, when I was going to start my own engineering business. I told him I really don't have a location. He said, yes you do. He had 4 address slots on his building on the corner of Clay Street and North Orange Avenue. He said you can have that address, 2920 N. Orange. I asked how much the rent is. He said rent is nothing. Whenever you start making money, you can pay whatever you think its worth.

So, I started to work developing this rather warehouse looking building, into an office with a drop ceiling, partitions, and carpet on the floor. Charlie provided the air conditioning, my rent was free. On a Friday, near Halloween in 1977, I started my own company. It was incorporated as Peninsula Engineering Inc.

I visited an old friend from Toastmasters and Rotary named Bert McCree. I told Bert what I was doing, and he handed 2 Sun Bank branch office jobs with a caveat. "Paul, don't try any engineering tricks on this. Each one of these are 5 ton loads, use a 5 ton air conditioner, okay?" So I walked out Friday afternoon, starting day of my new business, with 2 jobs.

As my business grew after a couple years I started doing better. I told Charlie I wanted to start paying rent and he said that's fine. I said well how can I pay you back for helping me? He said what I want you to do is PASS IT ON. I said pass it on? He said yeah; help somebody else get started in their own business. He said this is the American way, help somebody else, PASS IT ON. I said okay, I will.

I'm very happy to report that I have "passed it on" to John Elsea and Albert Marquez, P.E. John and Albert both have been very successful and they to have been able to follow Charlie Draper's lead of "pass it on" as they had passed it on to Rich King, P.E. and Brian Spangler, P.E.

When I sold Peninsula Engineering in 1999, I started Property Condition Assessment. I am happy to say that I continued to follow Charlie Draper's instructions to "pass it on" and that I had passed it on to Barbara Betz Weidner and Bob McBride.

So, Jake Stuart, you asked a very important question and I felt that it deserved a thorough answer. This is my story and I'm stickin' to it.

I encourage you to "pass it on", and the legacy is something that you will always be noted for. It's a good feeling to do something good for other people.

I believe there is a message in the Bible, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" and this is a variation of that same deed.

Thank you again Jake for that tremendous question.