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Hal's Story

It was while looking back on my life's experiences, searching for explanations of how and why I overcame many difficulties, that I came to believe my story might benefit others. This autobiographical sketch outlines a series of defining moments from which I learned lessons that have profoundly affected my life.

The Stage Is Set

I was born in my parents' bed in a farmhouse in Cranbury, New Jersey, in 1934, but I'll begin with a memory of sitting at the dinner table when I was seven years old. It left a question indelibly etched in my mind that has taken a lifetime to answer.

My father appeared to be unusually upset by a phone call reporting some mischief on the part of my two older brothers. Now, what had they done? I never found out. All I know is that it was something bad and it brought shame to the family name.

At the evening meal my father didn't say anything. The meal ended, the table got eerily quiet, and my father pointed at my older brothers, Malcolm and Garfield. His face was red and his voice shook as he said, "Young men, I want you to remember, no matter where you go in this world, you are a Williamson. Don't you ever forget it!" My two brothers nodded their heads and apparently knew what he meant.

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I didn't have the faintest idea what he was talking about. "Remember, you are a Williamson." How could I forget that? Do you know what I believed him to say? You must behave and perform better than others. He never said that, but that's what I thought he meant.

A terrible feeling came over me when I heard my father's words, because I already knew I was "less than" other kids. How can a child in the first grade know that he is somehow less worthy than other kids? I knew. We had reading groups in my class. We had the blue birds and the red birds. The red birds were the slow reading group and the blue birds were the fast reading group. I was a red bird. Even in the first grade I wasn't performing as a Williamson should, was I?



Fig. 1-1 Hal at age seven

I began to listen intently at evening meals, as my father told the history of our family, hoping to learn more about what it meant to be a Williamson. Our early ancestors came to America in 1640 and settled in what is now New Jersey, across the river from New

Amsterdam, now New York. I learned that my grandfather fought in the Civil War, was wounded and became a decorated veteran of that war. Following the Civil War my grandfather led a wagon train heading west, which was overtaken by Indians. He was one of the few survivors.

In the late 1930s, the height of the Depression, I had the sense that we were very poor. I gradually understood that my father had been a successful nurseryman and landscape architect in the 1920s. When the Depression hit, flowers and landscapes were the last thing on people's minds. I was learning what it meant to be a Williamson.

The next few years of my life had more tragedy in them than I could ever wish on anybody. In August, when I was eight, there was a gas explosion in our home. I was on the porch at the time and I was blown more than thirty feet in the air and across the driveway. I remember tumbling over and pushing the screen door off of me, racing up on the porch of the house and looking into the smoke-filled kitchen. I ran to tell my father, who was in the barn. I watched a neighbor rush into the house and bring out the blackened body of my brother Malcolm. All I could do was hold my head and scream. It was terrible.

Life went on, but sadly. I missed Malcolm. My mother was distracted with grief. Seasons came and went until I was ten years old, about to turn eleven. I remember a day in May. My father was very sick. A neighbor came and brought me home from school and said that my father's sickness had a name and it was cancer. They brought me to his bedside. That day I spent seven hours watching my father die. It was indescribably awful. It was not like the movies. I remember my father's mouth hanging loosely open as he convulsively breathed his last breaths. He was buried on my eleventh birthday.

All that remained of my family was my mother, my brother Gar, my younger sister Norma, and me. My Puerto Rican mother was just

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under five feet tall and weighed ninety pounds. I now know she was smart and gutsy. Then, I wondered how she was going to take care of us. The year was 1945, and the country was at war. My mother took over my father's business and ran it. I don't suppose we were quite as impoverished as I thought we were, but I thought of us as poor indeed.

School Is Scary

In the spring of 1947, when I was in eighth grade, an unusual thing happened. The principal from our elementary school came to our house. Oh, it's never good when the principal comes to your house. Now he had come to see my mother, the widow Williamson. I was not at the meeting. I did not learn what transpired until many years later. Apparently, the school had decided not to send me on to high school. I was not going to graduate; instead I would be held back to repeat the eighth grade. My mother apparently said, "How can this be? We are just learning about this now. Why didn't you tell us sooner?" Well, they had planned to hold me back in earlier years but the tragedies in the family made them feel so bad they did not have the heart to do it. A test administered to eighth graders had revealed beyond a shadow of a doubt that I was mentally defective. I was, in fact, retarded. Retarded. My mother said, "Oh that can't be my Harold. Harold is not retarded; he is not defective." My mother pleaded with him to let me graduate from eighth grade. He said, "I will not do it. The only way I will let your son leave this school is if you put him in a school for slow children, where he can learn a trade."

Soon after that encounter my mother sold the farm. She had discovered a private preparatory school in a small city nearby that would take any student if the family had enough money. They would take kids, no matter how defective they were, and mainstream them. That's the word we use today. And so I was put in this exclusive prep school with some of the money my mother received from the sale of the farm.

How exclusive was this school? Let me tell you. In many of my classes there were five kids and one teacher. Think about that. I had some classes where there were three of us and one teacher. Even with that kind of attention during my freshman year, I barely passed. My grades fell in the low C/high D range. With that kind of academic performance I would never graduate from high school. The school's teachers and the headmaster grew concerned about my poor performance so they tested me again. Extensive batteries of tests. And you know what the tests revealed? They validated the previous tests. I was retarded. Retarded.

Now the teachers could be sure of my mental condition. Soon every kid in the school seemed to know that Harold, the boy from the farm, the hick from the sticks, the dumbest kid in the school, was mentally defective. I became the butt of every joke. My classmates tortured me. In English class the teacher would put a sentence on the blackboard. I would be asked what part of speech a word was. I didn't know. I just didn't know. And what would my friends do? They would whisper, "It's a verb, Harold, a verb." And I would say, "A verb". The teacher would respond, "Mr. Williamson, the word is a noun." And then the rest of the class would laugh. They would do it again and again, sometimes with correct answers, most often not. These were my friends?

I hated school. Math class was the only bright spot in my day because the teacher, Mr. Blake, was a kind man who seemed to like me even though I did poorly in his class. But I didn't have the awareness I have now. Coincidentally, he was also our athletic coach. And guess what? I was good in track and wrestling. He wanted me out on the field and in the gym performing for him. You know, over my freshman year, Mr. Blake became the number one man in my life. He became the father I didn't have. The sun rose and set on Mr. Blake. In fact, every opportunity I had I would try to put myself in his company.

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Then I learned the truth. It was in the fall of my sophomore year, when there was one of those gatherings where parents and faculty get together. I would always go to those events. I never missed them. But I always, always went alone. It pains me to share with you the reason. I never invited my mother, for I was ashamed of her. My mother, with her short stature and her heavy accent seemed so different from the white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant parents of the other kids. My mother was the only person on the planet who believed in me. And I was ashamed of her. What a sad commentary on my state of mind.

That night when I got to the school I saw Mr. Blake near the door. He shook my hand and we began to talk. Then some parents came by and he turned to talk to them. I stood there with a cup of cider in one hand and a doughnut in the other, back to back with him, waiting for his conversation with the parents to end so that he could resume talking with me.

Well, it didn't work out that way. He apparently completely forgot that I was behind him. I could hear that he was talking to them about me, saying, "You know that boy Harold, he doesn't have it, he just doesn't have it," and, "Too bad. He is a nice kid, but he will never amount to anything."

Nothing I had heard up to that point in my life hurt as deeply as Mr. Blake's comments that night. As I burst into tears, I fled the hall and began to walk the streets of that small city. I couldn't go home. I had told my mother I would be out for the evening. As I walked that night and wept, I came to know the truth about me. I had suspected it in the first grade. And now I knew it. I didn't have it. Clearly in my mind I was not measuring up to "being a Williamson," whatever that meant. The most important man in my life had told the truth about me. By the time that evening was over I was filled with an overwhelming sense of inadequacy, for I knew the truth about myself.

I washed my face in a service station so my mother would not see

that I had been crying. I went home. It probably wouldn't surprise you at all to find that over the rest of the year I did not do well in school.

With about eight weeks left in that school year, my mother took me aside and said, "You know, my son, you are not doing well in school and it is so expensive to send you there, I just cannot bring myself to spend any more money on your private school education. You are not making much of this opportunity. If you can't turn things around academically in the next few months, you must go to public school next year."

I hadn't realized that it was a significant financial burden on the family to send me to private school. If you looked at the way my mother dressed me to go to school, you would never say, "There goes a kid from a financially stressed family." I know now that for her it was not a sacrifice. She did it because she wanted to. She loved me.

But now I was terrified. There had been twelve kids in my class in my farming community. Now I was in a school with as few as five kids in my class. And my mother was talking about sending me to a public school with thousands of kids! I was absolutely scared to death. That was on a Thursday.

A Revelation and a Catalyst

That Sunday morning I found myself in church. Oh, please don't think I was spiritually inclined. I wasn't. In our household, what happened on Sunday? On Sunday, we went to church. We weren't asked if we wanted to go to church. We went to church and that is why I was there, putting in my hour. Not paying attention, I couldn't wait until the benediction came down. I remember sitting there, feeling quite tortured by what I had learned on the Thursday before. As I sat rethinking the conversation with my mother, an unfamiliar voice filtered into my consciousness. It came from the pulpit and

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turned out to be the voice of a visiting pastor. I opened the bulletin and looked at the sermon title. It was a single word: Excellence. I do not know why, but that morning I sat up and listened. (My RAS, which you will learn about later, was working.) As the pastor spoke, he made one point again and again. The point was simply this: the gap between average performance and excellent performance is very small. And there really isn't anything you can't do or be if you want it badly enough and are willing to work hard enough for it. And then he enumerated countless average men and women down through the ages who, through determination and hard work, had stepped across that gap and snatched a measure of excellence. The talk by that visiting pastor was a catalyst.

When I left church that morning my spirits soared. You see, I felt I had found a philosophy I could put to work in my life. I knew what I was. Below average. With a big effort, why couldn't I be average? And, with an extraordinary effort why couldn't I step across that gap and snatch a measure of excellence? Why not? The following day I threw myself into my studies.

A couple of positive experiences stand out from this time. The first happened following an essay exam in history class, my junior year. Mr. Holly, the teacher, called me to his desk after reading my exam. "Did you write this?" he asked. I trembled as I answered, "Yes." Exam in hand, he marched me to the headmaster's office, threw it on his desk and said, "Read this." I was petrified. After reading the essay, the headmaster said, "This is the best piece of writing I've seen in years." I was amazed.

The second experience was in my senior English class where I had given a speech on "Getting a Good Night's Sleep." When I finished, the whole class applauded. This had never happened before. I walked over to Mr. Coyle, the teacher, and as he handed me the paper with my grade on it (an "A") he said, "You have a gift."

I graduated from high school at the top of my class. You may be thinking, "Isn't that wonderful? Now he certainly must have felt adequate." Oh, no, no. For you see, no one knew the truth. What was the truth? I'll tell you about the truth.

Two years earlier, the Monday morning following that catalytic Sunday service, I rose at 3:00 am to study, retiring on Monday night at 8:00 pm and getting up on Tuesday at 3:00 am to study, repeating this, frequently seven days a week as well as a number of days in the summer months, for the next two years. If you ever discovered the truth about me, what would you know? He is one dumb kid. All he ever does is study.

Higher Education and Working — The Disconnect Continues

Amazingly, I got into engineering school and graduated from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, using the same study methods. I married Trudy, a wonderful woman I met in prep school who also attended the same university, and we were raising a family. I had decided to become a patent attorney and went to Washington D.C. to work in the U.S. Patent Office determining whether or not people's ideas were patentable. I went to George Washington University School of Law at night.

Then it happened. It was near the end of the third year of a four-year program of work and study. One day I needed a case file I had worked on the previous week. I figured it would be helpful in preparing the file on a current, similar case. I went into the file room and I could not find the file. It was missing. I got the card that was used to check files out and instead of the person's name who had taken it, there was a code number. I went to the clerk and said, "Who has my file?" She said, "I can't tell you." I said, "Come on now, I am responsible for that file." I demanded that she produce the file. Finally

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she said, "Mr. Williamson, I am not supposed to tell you who has that file, but since you insist, I'll tell you. That file is in the hands of the Commissioner of Patents." Well, if you do not know anything about the Patent Office, the Commissioner of Patents is the head guy like the Chief Executive Officer, who runs the whole place. I said, "What does he want with it?" She said, "I thought that would get your attention. Let me tell you something else. For the past three months, every week someone from the Commissioner's office comes down here and goes to the file room and takes four or five cases. And do you know whose they are? They are always yours. Nobody else's."

You have no idea how scared that news made me feel. What were they doing? My experience so far led me to believe the worst. They were building a case to fire me. I was heartsick. I could not bring myself to tell my wife that I was in the process of being canned. I could not sleep; I began to lose weight.

Weeks passed, maybe a month or more. I remember the day it happened. It was a Tuesday at 11 o'clock in the morning when the call came to report to the Commissioner's office immediately. The dreaded day had come. I did not even know where his office was. It turned out that it was on the top floor of the Commerce Building in downtown Washington, D.C. There was a big corridor parallel to 14th Street and many corridors teed on it. One of them teed right on his office. As I walked down that corridor, I could see his office door was open. I could even see him inside. Let me tell you, it felt like I was walking the last mile before my execution.

As I neared his office, I could see him standing inside, behind his desk, talking to someone on his right. I hunkered against the wall to my right and looked in and, my gosh, it was my boss he was talking to. My boss didn't look very happy. I thought, *I am not going in there*. I got near the door and my boss saw me and gave me one of those head motions, you know, *get your backside in here*. I stepped into the

Commissioner's office and as I did I literally froze dead in my tracks. When I looked to my right, there were two men with flash cameras. Flash cameras. Oh my goodness, they are going to take pictures of it. What was about to happen? I could already see, in my mind's eye, my picture on the front page of the Washington Post. You know, with a convict's number on it and a caption that read, "Young Examiner exposed as a fraud, drummed out of the Patent Examiner's Corp." But there was something wrong with the picture. The Commissioner was smiling. He had his hand extended, so I came over rather tentatively, and took his hand; he pumped my hand as he said, "Mr. Williamson, let me be the first to advise you that you have been selected the Outstanding Patent Examiner of the Year. I want you to know that you are the youngest in the history of the Patent Office to receive this award."

Knowing my prior experiences, you might well think, "Wasn't that wonderful? He certainly must have felt adequate after that." Quite the contrary. I was scared to death. For, you see, they didn't know the truth. What was the truth? For the three years preceding the award, I had worked almost every Saturday. My boss didn't know. I had a big docket. I had great responsibilities. I was never paid for those Saturdays. It was assumed we took Saturdays off. What had they done? They had counted six days of work as if it had been done in five. At the end of three years I had broken the productivity record in the U.S. Patent Office. I wouldn't be surprised if I hold it now, nearly 40 years later. No one is going to ever break the productivity record unless what? Unless they are willing to work six days and get paid for five. Now what did I believe? I believed that they would soon discover that this was part of a plot of mine. I had cheated in getting this award by sneaking in on the weekends to work. I lived in fear that I would be discovered.

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Moving Up and Falling Down

I left that job when I graduated from law school and worked for several years as a patent attorney in New Hampshire. Then I got a job at the Westinghouse Airbrake Company in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After several years as a division patent counsel there, I was invited to join the executive offices of the company, where I worked for the next six years. At age 37, I was the youngest executive. I remember the day the top executives invited me to lunch. They met me in the lobby and said, "Hal, we are going out for lunch and while we are out the rest of the company is going to learn that you have just moved into the executive offices of this company. You will be one of us. A small handful of men who run this business." That afternoon they brought me up to the executive suite, in a prestigious building that stood on the point where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers come together in downtown Pittsburgh. They showed me into my new corner office and the door closed behind me. I stood there by a corner window looking down on the Monongahela River on the left and the Allegheny River on the right. The confluence of these rivers forms the Ohio River, which stretches as far as the eye can see. As I stood there that day I experienced a moment of truth. I suddenly saw a pattern of my behavior that had begun many years earlier. In my late teens and twenties, every day was the same for me; I experienced overwhelming feelings of inadequacy. Every day I would strive to do what? To do my best. To "be a Williamson," whatever that was. And here I was, 37 years old and living the same pattern. The new job, which was quite a promotion, made me feel bad because the belief wired in my brain told me the truth. The truth was that I was a below-average person.

To compensate, I put in unreasonable hours and worked very hard. Then what happened? People gave me plaques, commendations, promotions. This recognition made me feel worse. Cognitive

dissonance! (See Chapter 9.) I was a phony and a fraud. Everyday I expected to have the truth uncovered. It was a vicious cycle.

I had a remedy. In my late teens and early twenties, I had discovered something remarkable. I discovered a way to make those terrible feelings disappear. For you see, that was when I discovered alcohol. When I drank, oh, when I drank, those feelings went away. I would feel inside of my head like normal people look: all together.

By the time I reached the executive office, I knew that alcohol had become my best friend and that this was a problem. I would no more dream of facing a day without a drink than without food or air. There I was, standing in that grand office having made it to the top. And I had a moment of truth. I knew if I kept drinking I would lose that job.

On June 16, 1971, I joined a fellowship (hereafter referred to as The Fellowship) of men and women who had banded together to solve their common problem: drinking. It was not nearly as easy as it sounds. In fact it included unbelievable physical and mental anguish. Suffice it to say, I haven't had a drink since. No week of my life passes now that I don't spend a few hours in the company of men and women who find themselves today as I did then, searching for an answer....a better answer than we found in the bottle.

The next five years of my life were remarkably good. Why were they good? Westinghouse Airbrake sent me on to graduate business school. They knew I was in The Fellowship. I was sort of the company's resident drunk-made-good. I mean it was known and accepted. "Hal is in recovery." It was not a big deal; I didn't have anything to hide. And it was grand. At the end of five years with promotions and pay raises I headed a team that successfully fought a hostile takeover of the company. Lots of pats on the back. Then the company was about to be attacked by another company in a hostile takeover. And so the company fled to what is called a White Knight. That's what they call a friendly merger. The bigger company was

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American Standard Company in New York. Now, what happens with a merger? There were two people for every job and at the age of 42, I was suddenly unemployed.

Surviving Unemployment

I thought I would quickly find work somewhere else, but I didn't. I tried to launch a franchise business, but things didn't work out well. At the end of six months I was out of money. I had used up my 26 weeks of unemployment benefits. I had used up my severance pay. I had two kids in college and was unable to find work. I was desperate. I would search for work all day and find myself unable to sleep at night. Soon I was as anxious as I'd been during the last days of my drinking. I couldn't sleep and if I did fall asleep, I would wake up in the middle of the night with my mind racing.

Then I remembered something said by a wise, long-time member of my recovery program, a man who actively supported my recovery. This older gentleman said, "You know, Hal, at some point in your recovery it may seem that the world is going to come down on you. When that happens, I urge you to look in the basic text of *The Fellowship*, because somewhere in the pages of that book will be an answer to every problem that you will ever face in recovery."

I remember a particular night, six months without a job, unaware that I would spend three more years without work. I carried the recommended book to bed with me that night, sat up, turned to page one and began to read. I would read that book from front to back, if need be, to see if there was an answer for me. Early in the book I came upon a passage where the author seemed to be speaking to me. He said that if you were disturbed, no matter what the cause, the first thing you must do is quiet that disturbance. He said to do it was simple. Begin to repeat something you have committed to memory: a

prayer, a poem, a song. Over and over again. If no prayer or poem comes to mind, find a passage in a book that is meaningful to you and read it again and again and again. That night no prayer or poem came to mind, so I turned to a passage in this book that was especially meaningful to me. I propped myself up in bed and began to read. I remember the page that it began on, the bottom of page 83. (I changed “we” to “I”.)

If I am painstaking about this phase in my development, I'll be amazed before I am half way through. I am going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. I will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. I will comprehend the word serenity and I will know peace. No matter how far down the scale I have gone I will see how my experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. I will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in my fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. My whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave me. I will know how to handle situations which used to baffle me. I will suddenly realize intuitively that God is doing for me what I could not do for myself.

The passage went on in a way that was important to me and hearkened back to the words of the pastor in my youth.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us — sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

I do not know how many times I read the passage that night. But I can tell you this. When I woke in the morning, I found the book on my chest. And I had had my first peaceful night's sleep in six months. This was a practice I repeated every night for the next three years.

And what did I discover that night? I discovered something that you will discover in Chapter 6, namely that you can think only one

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single thought at a time. Who chooses the thoughts that you have? You do. It's the thoughts that you have that produce the feelings that you experience. And the person who controls the thoughts is you.

That was the second great lesson in my life. The first one, you can guess, happened when I was sixteen. Although I did not understand it back then, I discovered that I was a right-brained kid in a left-brained world (See Chapter 11). But I discovered that I also had a left side of my brain. And do you know what? If I used it, it worked exceedingly well. I never was retarded. I discovered that in my sixteenth year, but did not fully understand why for another 36 years, until I reached my early 50's.

The next three years of being unemployed were bad beyond description. Most of my work was at minimum wage. I borrowed heavily against the house to put my kids through college. My brother Gar, bless his heart, helped cover many of my oldest daughter's college expenses.

The last job that I had during this painful time was delivering phone books. Phone books. I don't think I will ever forget that Saturday morning when I dropped a stack of phone books on the stoop of a fine home in a suburb of the city. I was unaware the owner of the home was a senior executive who had been at the same level I was in another company there in the town. He did not know that I had lost my job. When I dropped the books on the stoop, apparently the sound carried through the screen door. As I was walking away, he came to the door and recognized me. I remember him shouting, "Hal? Hal is that you?" I remember thinking, *oh, good heavens, he saw me. Don't look back. Don't look back. Don't let him know what has happened to you.* And then I could hear his footsteps. He was running after me. I stopped at the gate and I looked back and I said, "Yes, John, it's Hal. I brought you your phone books." We stopped and talked a minute. I felt humbled and

embarrassed. From the executive offices to delivering phone books was an enormous step down.

Making the Best of It

Finally, I was offered a job in Rockford, Illinois, by the Sundstrand Corporation, a large aerospace company. It was a wonderful offer, with a terrific salary. However, something seemed to be wrong. I was being offered a position as a Junior Patent Attorney. That did not seem right. But I accepted the job and showed up to start my work there. When I arrived, I learned that the title in the job offer was not a mistake. I was to be a Junior Patent Attorney. Junior Patent Attorney is a title you give a person when they leave law school. First job out. I had twenty-two years of experience.

The boss would come to my desk in the morning and give me work to do that day. He would come back at five o'clock, pick up the completed work and take it home, critique it with red ink, then bring it back in the morning for me to do over again. I mean, after all, I was a Junior Patent Attorney.

I arrived in Rockford \$100,000 in debt. Now, the question was, should we declare bankruptcy? We made the very personal decision that we would not do that. We decided to pay off what we owed. It took eight years. (More details in Chapter 17)

My aging Cadillac, which creditors did not even want, was a gas guzzler. Because I couldn't afford to drive it, I went to work most days on a 50cc Honda Moped. I had the only moped in the executive parking lot. Brooks Brothers suits and a moped. Strange as it may seem, that was not a humbling experience. That was all I could afford. I will admit that many who saw me riding my scooter thought I was quite eccentric. And let me tell you this, when it got down near 0° it hurt to drive that thing.

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Working on Myself

The difficulty of these times was made easier because I began to work on myself. Since 1971 when I got sober, I'd been doing what I was told to do to stay sober. It worked to stay sober, but somehow I felt fake. I knew how to "act as if", but it wasn't authentic. Who am I really? I wondered. I tried every self-help technique I could find. All of them promised change and accomplishment. They filled me with hope. Some seemed to help. None lasted.

Then, in 1985, while at a conference of Couples in Recovery at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, I had what was to be a defining moment! Dr. Robert Henry, the CEO of a big city hospital, gave the keynote address. It was about brain dominance and its impact on our behavior.

The morning after Dr. Henry's talk I woke up excited and hopeful. We had completed a survey called the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument™, which determines how a person likes to think. When I saw my own thinking style profile, I was riveted! It didn't match the picture of myself I presented to the world. Maybe the brain held clues for both understanding myself and changing my behavior! Dr. Henry also advocated practicing affirmations, which I totally dismissed for the moment.

But I began to study the brain. I read every book I could find on the brain. I attended a training called Investment in Excellence®. I became certified to administer and interpret the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument™.

As I learned, I began sharing some of what I learned with friends and acquaintances on weekends in my home.

Birth of "Pathways to Greatness"

It had taken me ten years to go from Junior Patent Attorney to Director of Patents for the Aerospace group at Sundstrand, at that time a billion-dollar-in-sales operation. I had made it to the top again.

In the fall of 1991, a decision was made at the highest levels to terminate research and development as a major function in the company. Two hundred scientists would be let go; only 25-30 would remain. The day they made that decision they also made a profound decision about patents and invention. If you don't need research and development, do you need patent attorneys? No, you don't. That very day they made the decision to terminate the General Patent Counsel. They came to my office and told me, "Hal, we just terminated the General Patent Counsel."

What were they telling me? It was all over, wasn't it? Where do you go when you are 58? Do you find a place in industry? No. In private practice? No. What did I know? I knew I was in the budget for the rest of the year. So I arrived at work every day to sit and think. It felt like those years of unemployment in the seventies, when every day ended the same way for me. But, in the seventies I knew nothing of the lessons I had been describing in what I came to call the "Pathways to Greatness" program, referring to the neural pathways in the brain. I knew nothing about affirmations and visualization and how to rewire your brain. I also had no idea of the significance of thinking style preferences, much less of finding my purpose in life. In the seventies I'd repeated to myself again and again the promises from the basic text of *The Fellowship*, until I fell asleep, not realizing they were affirmations.

One painful day in the office I reflected on those affirmations I had committed to memory, and I found myself speaking them out loud:

If I am painstaking about this phase of my development I'll be amazed before I am half way through. I'm going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. I will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. I will comprehend the word serenity and I will know peace. No matter how far down the scale I have gone I will see how my experience will benefit others.

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That was it! Did you hear that? “No matter how far down the scale I have gone, I will see how my experience can benefit others.” You know what I would do? I would put together a curriculum that explained the lessons I had learned in my life, and the results of my brain research, somewhat as I had been doing informally at home. I would ask Harry Stonecipher, the CEO of my company, for eight hours of his time so that I could share this program with him.

Luckily, a neighbor of Harry’s had attended one of the informal programs in my home and raved about it to him. That got me in the door. God bless Harry. After experiencing it, Harry asked me what I wanted to do with the “Pathways to Greatness” program. I said that I wanted to bring it to all the employees of the company. Harry responded, “Okay. Do it. You’ll have to attract people to come voluntarily. We’ll see how it goes. If it’s not working at the end of the year, you will be out of a job.” I accepted the offer on the spot.

In the first few months, attendance at the programs was low. Usually a manager and a few key staff members would show up, checking it out. Weeks, or sometimes months later, their entire departments would attend the program. Before a year was up, the scheduled classes were filled to capacity, requests for the program began to fill my schedule to the limit, and I had a waiting list. News of the personal and professional usefulness of the training spread by word of mouth. I was asked to offer the program on weekends at my home for employees’ family members, which I did.

In three years, nearly six thousand employees, from all over the country, participated in the program. I learned later that literally hundreds of employees wrote notes to the company’s CEO expressing their appreciation for making the program available for all employees.

An Abrupt Transition

It has been said that every story has a beginning, a middle and an end. Some stories have no ends; they are the ongoing chapters of life. I like to think my life is like that. Some chapters cover decades while others cover only a single day.

I would like to share one of those single day chapters in the story of my life. My wife, Trudy, had joined me out on the lecture circuit, touring the country, assisting me as I was delivering the curriculum that you will experience by reading this book. Our plan was to spend the balance of our life together, 24 hours a day, traveling and delivering the “Pathways” material.

Etched in the neural circuits of my memory are the events of that day, October 19, 1994. We were in Miami. It was a special day weather-wise, because the first bubble of crisp, dry Canadian air had pushed its way into Miami Lakes. The humidity was gone. We left Shula's Resort Hotel together and began our morning walk, heading west. As we got near a toll road, an interstate that crossed the road we were on, we paused and then headed south across the divided highway. We got to the broad, palm-lined island in the middle and I held my hand back toward Trudy, who was walking slightly behind me to my left, to stop her until the traffic was clear. It cleared very quickly, because one hundred yards away to our right there was a traffic light and all the traffic had stopped. An exit ramp coming down from the south and off the toll road fed the traffic light from that direction. I saw a car heading down the ramp. I assumed the light was about to change. I reached back to grab Trudy's hand in mine as we started to cross the last leg of the highway. We were almost safely across. They tell me I had my foot on the curb we were heading for, when a car exiting the Interstate raced down that ramp, beat the yellow light and came east on Miami Lakes Drive. The driver was blinded by the rising morning sun. He never saw us. He hit us both.

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I remember becoming conscious and frantically trying to sit up. I looked down and I could see my bones sticking through my pants. Then someone's hands were on my chest with more hands on my head. A man was saying "Don't move, don't move." He pushed me back down on the pavement and just before my eyes filled with blood, I looked for Trudy's right hand that I had been holding. And she was gone. I had lost her. I wept and my body shook. I wept tears of sorrow for myself. Forty-three years is a long time to have been together.

But along with the tears of sorrow were tears of relief and thanksgiving, for you see, my Trudy was at a place with the God of her understanding, where there would be no chemotherapy, no agonizing death from the cancer most people did not know she had.

To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose. A time to be born and a time to die. It was not my time to go. This strengthened my belief in the purpose of my life. I decided to leave Sundstrand and strike out on my own, taking the "Pathways to Greatness" program to a wider audience. I called my new company Hope Unlimited.

Life Begins Anew

Following the accident I felt terribly alone. In forty-three years of being together, Trudy and I had developed quite a rhythm. Now it was as if the music had stopped.

In the months that followed, I returned to work. My neck was broken; my right leg had a compound fracture, but I did what it took to get moving again. Because I felt strongly that it had not been my time to go, I wanted to dedicate the rest of my life to living my life with purpose, a life of love, a life of service to God and my fellow man.

But, by the time eight months had gone by, gnawing loneliness dominated my feelings, even when I was engaged in my work. I often thought of the Frost poem. I had taken the spiritual path on the road

less traveled. And it was my sense that there were not a lot of us on it. There seem to be a lot of us when we gather at conferences, because we are all in one room. But on the roads of daily life, I felt quite alone. So, I began to accept the invitations of friends to stop at a church where there would be other people like me, people who were widowed, divorced, and single. But somehow it was all wrong for me.

I remember going home after one such gathering and thinking to myself, *I can't do that. I can't do that anymore.* At that moment I was overwhelmed with the reality that the life I had known with Trudy was over — forty-three years, a remarkable life with a remarkable woman. As I lay in bed that night, I realized that I would most likely be alone for the rest of my life.

I decided to just throw myself into my work. I would live my life on purpose. I would devote every waking moment of my life to my work. I would dilute none of my energies with looking for somebody else. I was so overwhelmed by that thought that I got out of bed and knelt by the side of the bed in the darkness and I literally wept for myself. I was going to be alone forever. I prayed, "Oh God, oh God, if there is to be someone in my life won't you please put that soul on the road that I am traveling now."

On October 19, 1995, the one year anniversary date of Trudy's death, I had arranged to deliver the "Pathways" program to the therapists and patients at Gateway Rehabilitation Center, in western Pennsylvania, one of the largest drug and alcohol treatment centers in the state. I wanted their evaluation of this material for purposes of treatment. When it was over, I told my life story and the story of Trudy's death.

The Vice President of Treatment Programs, Sharon Eakes, came up to talk with me when I finished. I had known Sharon twenty-five years earlier, when she was a new therapist there. Now she practically ran the place. She said "Hal, you know, we have something in

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common. Do you remember Gene Curley, a doctor?" I said "Yes." I did. She told me she had married him. Then she said, "Gene died of a heart attack four years ago. And during his autopsy they discovered that he had small tumors in both lungs. He would have developed cancer. He was spared the same terrible death that your Trudy was spared."

We fell into easy conversation, and before we parted, I promised to send her Danah Zohar's book *Quantum Self* and Sharon promised to send me a paper she'd written on Chaos Theory.

I headed back to the Midwest that night. A day or two later my daughter Sue came to my house. We were now working together, taking our message of hope around the world. I told Sue, "I had a dream last night," and I shared the dream with her. I usually don't remember the details of my dreams and it is not my nature to share my dreams with others. This one was vivid. The dream involved Sharon. Sue suggested that I write Sharon and share the dream with her. I said, "No way!" but later thought, *Why not?* Referring now to the letter, which Sharon still has, I can tell you what I wrote to her:

What I am about to share may strike you as odd. In fact I can rarely recall having shared with another the type of experience I am about to share now. I have no idea of the meaning or significance, if any, of my experience. The experience involves a dream I had two nights ago. It was a vivid dream that began on the streets of a city. The city street bustled with activity. The dream opened with you and me meeting at a crosswalk in mid-street. We both appeared surprised to meet this way. Your characteristic and perpetual smile appeared spontaneously when first we recognized each other. You said nothing. I spoke and simply said, "Shall we dance?" And you nodded your assent. We both seemed to know that we were to waltz. You placed the fingertips of your right hand in my upraised palm. With my right arm lowered to receive your left arm, we began to dance. It was

most awkward at first as I tried to lead and you tentatively began to follow. Within moments our individual steps and movements fell into a smooth and flowing pattern that allowed us to glide effortlessly up through the middle of the street toward a rise that crested on what appeared to be the highest point in the city. As we arrived at the crest, the music that only you and I seemed to hear, softly ended. We stopped our dance and after but a fleeting moment we drifted apart as if guided by an unseen conductor. I slowly bowed at the waist and you simultaneously curtsied with a deep flourish. And this is the way the dream ended. I woke refreshed with the details of the dream foremost in my mind.

We began to correspond and meet. And on May 27, 1996, in Inverness-by-the-Sea in northern California at 12:00 noon, Sharon and I were married.

One life ended in the middle of a street. A second life began in the middle of a street, in a dream.