

In the beginning...

My grandparents emigrated from Japan around 1918 and set up their residence in the midsection of California as fruit and vegetable farmers. Both of my parents grew up in the 1930's on these farms. After WWII broke out their families along with thousands of other Japanese Americans and/or of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast were relocated and incarcerated in barb-wired camps located in remote desolate areas inland. My parents met in such a camp located in Arkansas. When they were released in 1944-1945, they had nothing and had to start their lives over again ---- they were emigrants in their own country. They were 18 years old. Coincidentally, my dad had served in the US Navy while his family was in the camp. And from this experience my parents taught me the importance of dedication and focused/hard work in order to build upon one's future. They worked and saved to make sure that my sister and I would go to college and have an opportunity for a better life than what they had.

My dad worked 2 jobs as I was growing up. I remember being in my pajamas before bedtime when he'd come home. And on Saturdays he worked, too. But he enjoyed his work and that taught me to find work that I enjoyed, was good at and, therefore, would be successful at as a result. My mom always worked full-time also; so, I learned from her that women could be independent and a productive income-producing person. She also taught me about volunteerism and giving back to the community as she devoted so much of her free time to the Buddhist Temple where we were members, as well as other Japanese social service organizations.

My parents taught me by leading by their example. I would later realize that by observing their actions it would influence who I would later become.

I was born and raised on the Northside of the City of Chicago ---- I've lived in this area my entire life. Until I was 8 years old my parents, sister and I shared a 2 Bedroom/1 Bath apartment with my grandparents. Looking back, I have no idea how we managed in such a small space but there are only fond memories of those years growing up in that apartment. Again, they were like emigrants starting over with their lives, so they did what they had to do to survive and make a go of it. My sister and I both attended public elementary and high schools.

As an elementary school child, I remember experiencing racism and bullying from some neighborhood boys because of my Japanese ancestry. But I never succumbed to it ---- I had somehow been taught to be better than that. And at an early age I can remember realizing that I had a sensitivity to others --- that I could look into their eyes and feel their emotions. I was an empath.

When I entered high school the Vietnam War was raging and escalating, and I supported the anti-war sentiments and efforts. At this time, I also became a contrarian and questioned everything --- I was becoming an independent thinker. During that time in my junior year I had a couple of friends who I'd talk to and discuss philosophy with the war, anti-establishment ideas ---- and we decided to create a newsletter based upon our questioning minds, discussions about the Vietnam War, poetry, the ideas of peace and coexistence. We named it **The Cosmic Frog**. So, we started writing and creating these issues, copying and distributing it among our fellow students at Lane Technical High School. Well, the administration did not appreciate that and so 2 of us were summarily suspended and the remaining editor was expelled from school. We ended up going to The Northwestern Legal Aid Clinic (affiliated with Northwestern University School of Law) and they decided to represent us by filing suit against the Chicago Board of Education. In my senior year we lost the case in Cook County Court but then the ACLU came and took over the case for appeal and in my freshman year in college the case was overturned, and we won in appellate court --- *Fujishima vs the Chicago Bd of Education* was a landmark case at the time regarding free-speech.

And to this day I am a supporter of the underdog; those less advantaged --- I believe that many of these people if given a chance would make their lives better. There are countless examples of people who came from tough homes, had tough lives but somehow had figured out how to create a life of fulfillment and joy, success and paying it forward by serving and teaching others.

I attended Northwestern University studying Psychology and Biology; I loved the idea of studying the mind but also loved the sciences. But soon I discovered that the kinds of jobs awaiting me after graduation did not interest me nor would they fulfill me. I stumbled into the real estate business by total chance. It had been completely outside my radar. It allowed me

to meet and talk to people and in the end...help them. It was a perfect fit for me. And so, my adult life began post-graduation...

My life...

I am entering my 43rd year in the real estate business and I love it more now having gained the experience and wisdom over those years.

My life has been a reflection of helping others by creating win/win relationships, by having the best interests of others in the forefront of my efforts and doing what was right and always speaking the truth.

I have also been blessed having met so many wonderful people who have allowed me to grow and benefit from them. I am honored to call them my friends and business associates.

“Wherever you go, go with all your heart.”- Confucius

I have a lifelong commitment to excellence --- to be the best that I can be and to continue growing and evolving as a person.

In my pursuit to help others I have used my mind to think outside the box to find solutions --- using both sides of my brain in this process.

I have incorporated volunteer work as an additional component of my lifelong desire to give and help others --- Lakeview Food Pantry (the issue of hunger in America is an important one to me), I donate money and do home deliveries to those who are elderly and handicapped who are unable to come into the Pantry to receive their food distributions. Best Buddies and eBuddies (started by the Shriver/Kennedy families to pair those with special needs with a Buddy to foster communication and relationships outside of their respective and familiar communities) --- my local Best Buddy is Chuck (Chuck had an aneurism and the entire right side of his body is paralyzed; he uses an electric cart to navigate his way around) and my eBuddy is Stephen who resides in Toronto.

Chuck and I have shared special times together talking, laughing, getting to know each other's circle of family and friends, our communities, our joys as well as our routines. As a result, who was once a stranger has now become a familiar friend whom I look forward to seeing.

*“We Make a Living by What We Get; We make a Life by What We Live.” –
Ronald Reagan*

I am also on the Board of CIERA (Center for the Interdisciplinary Exploration and Research in Astrophysics) which is affiliated with Northwestern University's Dept of Astronomy and Physics. This department was a part of the international team which made the breakthrough discovery of gravitational waves which were created when 2 black holes merged 1.3 billion miles away from earth and which occurred 1.3 billion years ago! My passion with this group is to combine the resources of Northwestern's Astronomy and Physics Dept along with other departments to advocate for and promote STEM education to Chicago Public School (CPS) students in the inner city to shine a light on the opportunities ahead of them through STEM education. My hope is that, in turn, they will pay it forward to those who may follow them on their roads to a better and more fulfilling life.

The main reason that I got into the real estate business was because I wanted to and enjoyed helping people --- over the years I have derived much joy in this process. I believe that this is the primary reason that I am still in this business more

than 42 years later. And this joy has never diminished. As I continue my journey forward in my life, I have expanded this deep passion and life purpose having helped numerous members of my peer group who got into this business, extending this to my team and now I am expanding it into all realms of my life through my volunteer and philanthropic activities.

I am living a life fulfilled and ever-expanding. I count my blessings daily looking back with gratitude of how my life has unfolded. I am excited and looking forward to the next chapters of my life as they unfold.

I welcome those whose paths shall cross mine as well as those whose paths may join mine on this road called life.

Wishing all of us joy on our journeys!

Burt

“Peace in its Most Fundamental Form is the Connection of One Human Spirit to Another.” Archbishop Desmond Tutu

A recurring thought and meditation:

...I enter this world alone and I pass from it alone...

What did I do in between those two points in time? Who did I share it with? What difference did I make? What were the memories that were left behind with those whose paths crossed with mine? How will I pass from this life ---- what will I be reminiscing about as I look back upon my life during those last remaining breaths?

“Remember that the Happiest People are not Those Getting More, but Those Giving More.” H. Jackson Brown Jr. and Rochelle Pennington
