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AUTOBIOGRAPHY Written April, 2017

Coming from a large family made me realize my number one responsibility in life was to my children. I remarried when my three kids were fairly young and came together with my wife, Ann, and her two young children. Ann and I, along with the help from my first wife, Christie, made sure that all our children felt comfortable with each other. They became best friends. They are now grown, all having graduated from college, and giving us nine grandchildren to spoil.

Certain things seem to fall in place in one's life without knowing that everything you did as a young person was preparing you for a monumental task.

Growing up was a succession of moves every two years that pushed me to adjust to new friends, new school, and new activities, mainly sports. Being blessed with athletic ability played an important part in my development. But I had one constant, a mother and father that were dedicated to raising their six kids with a sense of who they were, and that their dreams could be reached. We were a close knit unit that always had each other to rely on. My father was a fighter pilot in World War II and an executive with shell oil company. He was very tough and driven to succeed. My mother did the hard part of raising all the kids. The two of them have always been my heroes. They were the backbone of what I needed to find myself at different times in my life.

In high school, I became the top athlete in my area in Albany New York. I made all league in football, basketball, and baseball, and was highly recruited. I eventually chose University of Massachusetts because they agreed to let me play both football and baseball. I was a top draft choice of the Baltimore Orioles, but I wanted to continue my athletic career and college.

UMass was just what I needed, a good academic program and two sports I love to play. While I had trouble concentrating on academics, I was smart enough to get by. My education was a combination of ball, social activities, and academics. UMass was a good choice. It had a diversity of students and a fraternity where I learned to work with others. I left college with all the records for a safety at UMass, some of which I still hold after 47 years. Unfortunately, I fell a few credits shy of graduating.

I went to Las Vegas, Nevada not knowing what I was going to do. I met an old football friend there, and he had me play in a flag football game against Nellis Air Force Base. It was there that my life changed forever. I met a man, Bob Burton, that ran the juvenile detention center, and I never looked back. He hired me to be a temporary worker, and I started learning about troubled kids.

The detention center was a lock up for kids. It was a very intimidating place because I realized I was as locked up as the kids were. Young kids who were troubled were put in the detention with older serious offenders. It was a lethal

combination, as the young kids wanted to emulate the older kids. There was no safe place to put the kids, no alternatives. I would look in their rooms at night and see kids that needed to be dealt with, but demanded a cell door to stop them. In essence, the door became their father. There was no way in that environment that we could accomplish anything but warehousing the kids. Most of the kids were minority, either Hispanic or black, true of the system today. There had to be an alternative. There had to be a better way. Bob and I were going to start a new business that dealt with troubled kids. It was going to shake up the system that existed at that time.

Bob Burton and myself went to Phoenix, Arizona to try to get started. We picked Arizona because it was the newest state and was just developing its bureaucracy. We felt we could grow together. While trying to sell our concept to Phoenix, a judge in Tucson, Arizona heard what we were trying to do and invited us to speak to him. We told him we would take his toughest kids and run a wilderness quest for them. It was 15 days, and the court was happy with the results. John Collins was the judge that hired us, and he told us of a grant being given out for \$35,000 to work with kids in their own homes. We applied and got the grant. We took the contract to the bank and borrowed \$25,000 to get started. We never looked back.

We incorporated in July, 1973, and became one of only two profit making companies working with kids in the country. We were called VisionQuest.

Our name was taken from the Plains Indians concept of a right of passage. We were looking for a way to impact kids' lives by giving them a way to win, to start something and finish it. My responsibilities were simple, to run the operations of the VQ; from kids living in their own homes to kids in group homes, on wagon trains, ocean programs, quests, and fathers and mothers groups. We got the whole family involved. We grew from six kids in 1972 to 1500 kids in eight states by 2000. Our wagon trains travelled through all 48 contiguous states.

I should explain the profit making decision we made at VQ. We were undercapitalized for our first 15 years, but we didn't want to raise money. We figured we had to succeed or we would be fired. We loved competition. We wanted to be our own Board of Directors and not have to succumb to political pressures. It was a wise decision. When you own something, it becomes yours and you take full responsibility for everything that evolves.

As part of our development, we turned to a circle concept of communication. We were very symbolic in all our dealings with the kids and staff; standing in a circle meant everyone's perspective was taken into account. It was mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual in its concept. Plan, touch, commitment, and control were areas we taught the kids and staff to deal with. Our kids were coming from where we all do: dealing with abandonment, abuse, and boundary issues, and getting a true sense of self through one's accomplishments.

One of the symbols we used with the kids and staff were eagle feathers. Again, taken from the Native American, it was a way of connecting symbolically the mother and father within each of us. Eagles represented the father in the sky; and standing on the earth represented the mother earth. When someone was patted down, it made the connection of mother and father. The ceremonies we had with the kids and staff were very powerful.

As in life, we faced our share of tragedy. We had seven kids and two staff die in the Gulf of Mexico when a sailing vessel was overturned during a storm. It shook us to the core. We took a hard look at ourselves and fought our way through the depression. One thing that we knew was that these lost kids and staff went out the front door in life, working to better themselves. We knew we took risks. We put as much safety as possible to our program, but we could not play patty cake and reach these kids. They were the toughest of the tough.

In the 30 years I was with VQ, we went from six kids to 1500 kids. We went from two staff to 1250 staff. We had documentaries done by CBS, BBC, French TV, and the Japanese wrote a book about VQ and did a documentary. We were studied by the Rand Corporation and got accredited by NIMH-National Institute of Mental Health. We had over 25,000 kids go through the program and affected the lives of many more.

VisionQuest was a one of a kind. It was the toughest task I ever dreamed of, and was well worth the agony and pain that came with it.