

## **Twenty-Seven IFs in Life On My Path to Becoming a Teacher Sophomore – Clinical Depression and Three IFs**

### **Not What Was Supposed to Happen**

I had gotten off to a slow start at Stanford. In my first two quarters, I earned five units of A's and eleven units of C's. Not a great start for my B average goal. However by Spring Quarter, my A units outnumbered my C's six to three. I was also now much more confident in myself as a student.

My father delivered on his promise and gave me my mother's 1957 Ford convertible. I drove myself to Stanford a week before the start of school that Fall to move into the Alpha Delta Phi Frat House, my new campus home. That first week was spent getting to know my fraternity brothers, playing football on the Frat House front lawn, and just hanging out with my new housemates.

On the first day of classes, however, things began falling apart and I had no clue why. As I was sitting in my first lecture, I began quietly crying. Tears were streaming down my face. I leaned my head back so that no one around me would notice. The tears were not a product of some mysterious allergy. The tears were evidence of just how massively depressed I felt. Depressed? Why was I so depressed? I thought everything was going so well. Obviously, everything wasn't. I didn't know why I was depressed. "Why" didn't matter. I just was. Depression is like being homesick, but already being at home, so there is nothing you can think of doing to make the "homesick" feeling go away.

I struggled through that first week of school hiding my feelings as best I could. On Sunday I took myself home and shared my depressed state with my parents. They immediately called Dr. Betts, our family doctor, who came right over. After talking with me briefly he said, "You know there are other kinds of doctors." I said, "I know, that's why I'm here." My father's diagnosis of my problem was that it was caused by the massive bump on my head I had received diving into our backyard pool at the beginning of the summer. Both Dr. Betts (who was the one who had stitched up that gash on my head) and I disagreed with that.

Dr. Betts called a psychiatrist he knew named Harry and scheduled an appointment for me that day. I am sure Harry had a last name, but Harry was what everybody called him. Harry met with me, put me on tranquilizers, and fit me into his schedule everyday for the coming week.

As an odd coincidence, Harry's office was in the same medical complex as was my dentist. Seeking psychiatric help was not exactly a badge of honor back then and people under the care of a psychiatrist generally

kept that fact hidden. For each of my appointments with Harry I would enter the front door and exit out the back. This front-door/back-door procedure kept any of Harry's patients from being seen by any other patient. However, the back of Harry's office was only a narrow courtyard away from the window in front of my dentist's dental chair. So, nearly every time I exited from my visits with Harry, I could see my dentist working and he could see me leaving. A fact that neither my dentist nor I ever mentioned at any of my dental visits.

The only one in my fraternity that I told of my battle with depression was my friend Andy. I knew he would keep my secret. I could not then also know how fortunate it would prove to be that Andy knew.

### **Clinical Depression**

The persistent feeling of sadness or loss of interest that characterizes major depression can lead to a range of behavioral and physical symptoms. For me these symptoms included changes in energy level, concentration, and self-esteem. I also had feelings of hopelessness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, excessive crying, and a feeling of social isolation. In addition, I knew that depression is also associated with thoughts of suicide.

### **Harry**

Harry diagnosed me as having Clinical Depression. The Recommended Treatment: Antidepressants and talking therapy, particularly if one's depression is quite severe. After my first week of therapy, Harry told me he had talked it over with my parents and they had granted him permission to have me institutionalized. Apart from his concern over the severity of my depression, Harry felt my being admitted to a local mental hospital would permit me to participate daily in the group therapy sessions he was conducting there.

I told him that I preferred remaining in college, even though it was rather difficult for me right then. I also said that I knew one of his concerns had to be that I might be suicidal. I assured him that I definitely was not. Yes, I was depressed, but my bringing myself to my parents and to Dr. Betts was no different than my coming home because I was physically sick. In both cases, I would have come home seeking help in getting better. If I were suicidal, I would have skipped the seeking help part.

The book *The fifty Minute Hour* was published in 1955. It was one of the many books I read about therapy as I was going through the experience. The fifty-minutes referred to the length of each therapy session. All Harry's appointments began on the hour and lasted fifty minutes. That extra ten minutes insured his patients never saw each other. That, and the coming in the front door and leaving by the back door routine.

Another of the books I read was Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Among the many things Harry and I talked about during our sessions were any of my dreams that I could remember. There was a recurring theme in my dreams that Harry pointed out to me. For example, in my dreams, if I fired a gun, no bullets would come out, if I were riding in an Ambulance, the siren would no work, and so on. The theme was alternately hopelessness and powerlessness.

When I say Harry and I talked during our sessions, it was pretty much a one sided conversation. Harry would ask me a question. The answer I gave would prompt another question. After I had answered several questions, the next question from Harry would be, "What do you think about what you have just said?" I did most of the talking, and eventually learned to do much of the listening at the same time.

You will see shortly in the [Every Two Years – Depression's Beginning](#) section what I learned about myself from both talking and listening. But first, Hell Week.

### **Hell Week**

Fraternity Hell Week is the traditional week (or hopefully less) of hazing that fraternity pledges endure before being formally initiated into the fraternity at Hell Week's end.

The dates of the Alpha Delts Hell Week were kept secret in advance. Neither my fellow pledges nor I had any idea when it would be happening. My friend Andy, who as I said earlier was the only one in my fraternity that I told of my depression, found my tranquilizer pill container and used the information on the label to contact Harry.

Andy explained to Harry what the Alpha Delt Hell Week involved. They both agreed it was something I would find extremely difficult, if not impossible, to endure. On the day that the first night of Hell Week was to begin, Andy explained the situation to me and that both he and Harry agreed I should not go through it this year. So I spent Hell Week at my parents home and Andy made an illness excuse for my sudden absence.

When I finally went through Hell Week the following year with my brother Jack's and my friend Keith's group of pledges, I survived the ordeal quite nicely. However, I could see that both Andy and Harry had been quite right in not letting me go through that experience a year earlier.

### **But What Happens If...**

In the last paragraph of the [College -Freshman Year – Away at School](#) section of this Chapter, I asked what happens if a "you can't make me" person like me is forced for years to do things he does not want to do,

cannot accept, and has no way of escaping? I then said to read the Sophomore section that follows to find out. What follows now is what happened.

### **Every Two Years – Depression’s Beginning**

In the [Fresno – Family Background](#) section of this chapter, I mentioned that our home on Weldon was across the street from Fresno High School and within easy walking distance from the elementary school we all attended. The school was College Elementary School. It was usually just referred to by its alternate name - Training School. Training School because it was used to train college students to become teachers

I attended Training School from kindergarten through fourth grade. The school was small, with only one class at each grade level. From the end of my kindergarten year to the end of my fourth grade year I happily awaited the start of each new school year. School was where all my friends were and I very much looked forward to being with them again.

Dougie Potter, Richard Linder, Keith Bush and Michael Nokes were my four best friends. I regarded everyone in class as a friend, but this group of four and I were close enough to be constant visitors to each other’s homes. Alice Kay Moffet was my secret crush all five years, with her friends Judy and Kathy also in the running.

When my brother Paul, who was two years ahead of me in school, was in the sixth grade my parents became so upset with the Principal and how he was managing or not managing Paul’s behavior that they decided not to send any of us to Training School the following year. For my fifth grade year, my new school would be Heaton Elementary.

I absolutely, positively did not want to leave my friends and go to some new school for any reason and especially not just because my parents did not like the Training School’s Principal. But I absolutely, positively did not have a choice.

Paul would not be joining his three brothers at Heaton. He would be in seventh grade and would be joining his Training School friends from his kindergarten through sixth grade years at Alexander Hamilton Junior High. I was not at all happy, but my father assured me that I would be with all my Training School friends again when we were all seventh graders at Hamilton.

I was not happy at Heaton. My parents attributed the fact that I was no longer smiling to the fact that the fifth grade is when I started wearing braces. Laurel Kay, the only Heaton friend I made in my two years there, told me the other children’s nickname for me was Zombie.

The event that sticks out the most in my memory of my time at Heaton was Valentines Day my first year there. Our teacher placed a big box at the front of the room with a slot in it for our depositing Valentines Day cards for our classmates. The box would be opened on the 14th and the cards distributed. I prepared a card for every one of my classmates and brought them to class in a paper bag. I felt so shy and out of place in that classroom that I couldn't even bring myself to walk to the front of the room and place my cards in that box. Instead, I dropped the bag of cards in a trash can on my way home from school that day.

My Weldon home was not in the area served by Heaton, so none of my new classmates lived anywhere near me. Laurel's home was at least on the way to my home. Until my family moved to Indianapolis Avenue during my sixth grade year, on many days, Laurel and I would walk home together until we reached the place where her path ended and I had to keep on walking.

I was not happy at Heaton, but my unhappiness was promised to be only a two-year sentence of sadness. However, in my sixth grade year, when Paul was in his last year at Hamilton, we moved to our new home on Indianapolis Avenue. A move so far away from our Weldon Avenue address that it brought with it a whole new school district.

My seventh and eighth grade years were now to be spent at the K-8 Bullard School. No strings my father tried to pull could get me into Hamilton. Paul had ended his two years at Hamilton and would now be joining his Training School and Hamilton friends as a Freshman at Fresno High School – that school across the street from our Weldon Avenue residence.

Once again I would not be with my Training School friends, or even with Laurel Kay, my only friend from Heaton. And, once again my father responded to my unhappiness by assuring me that all my friends from Training School and Heaton and even Bullard would be with me when I was a Freshman at Fresno High School. At that time, Bullard students were still in the Fresno High School District. I was not happy at Bullard. Evidence of my lack of feeling a part of either Heaton or Bullard (I believe my Zombie nickname also followed me to Bullard) is that the only name of a classmate I can remember from the four years I spent at the two schools is Laurel Kay's.

My eighth grade year at Bullard was to be my last year in Fresno. As the [Fresno – Family Background](#) section of this chapter explained, I was not to be a Fresno High School Freshman. My Freshman year was, instead, to be spend one-hundred seventy miles away with none of my friends from any of my three Fresno schools to keep me company.

In the [High School - Freshman Year – A Slow Start](#) section of this chapter, I mentioned my new-school shyness that even kept me from going out for frosh-soph football. I also mentioned that the other Freshmen came from nearby elementary schools, so nearly everybody but me had friends around them.

At my fiftieth high school reunion, there was a point where everyone decided to do mini-reunions with their elementary school classmates. I said “everyone” but one other person and I were not “everyone”. Since we were the only two who did not share everyone else’s history of continuing friendships, we were left to visit with each other. An unintended sad reminder of how alone I felt as an entering Freshman.

By my Sophomore year I was beginning to come out of my shell. I was on both the football and swimming teams and was beginning to make friends whose names I can still remember. However, the depression that was to be my future was still building inside of me. That depression would end up producing its own series of IFs. My depression and its causes changed my feelings about life. Not just the life I had experienced as a child, but the lives of children like me everywhere.

### **If You can’t Say Something Nice...**

My school changes every two years brought with them loss of friends and my repeated failures to fit in. The school moves and the broken promises that accompanied them produced the feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness that depression represents.

While I was beginning to approach what seemed like normalcy in my Sophomore year in high school, there was a much bigger problem that would eventually prove to be the trigger that waited until my Sophomore year in college to reveal itself. My mother would often say to her children, “If you can’t say something nice about someone, then don’t say anything at all.” A nice sounding sentiment, but what I learned from it was not what my mother had intended.

My mother really did not like my father’s three brothers. She was constantly badmouthing them to us as we were growing up. However, whenever any of them were around, she was always quite nice to them. What I learned from this was if people said nice things to me it was because they were supposed to. It did not represent their true feelings.

When I was in Training School I never had any doubt about the feelings of my friends. When I was at Heaton, I was never bullied. Everyone was always nice to me to my face, but I new I was being called names behind my back. Laurel told me what her girlfriends in class really felt about me. She wasn’t telling me to make me feel bad. She just wanted me to

try being a little less zombie-like. But what I learned from that was girls I didn't know personally were just like my mother. What they said to me wasn't the same as what she said to each other.

At Heaton and at Bullard, the only interactions I had with my fellow students outside of class was with the other boys in my grade – playing kickball or basketball or some other all-boy sport. I was not happy at school, but my unhappiness didn't carry over to games at recess or P.E. My absence of friends was not as noticeable to me then.

As I said, by my Sophomore year I was beginning to come out of my shell. However the coming-out was only around guys and centered on sports. There were no female friends in my life. There was no Laurel.

In the [High School - Senior Year – The Best Year](#) section of this chapter, I said that throughout my Freshman, Sophomore and Junior years I was basically a social isolate. No school dances, no dates, no female friends. Thanks to my friend Andy's girlfriend Bonnie Jane, as a Senior, I finally developed the nerve to occasionally ask girls out. What is missing from that section of this chapter is how miserably I failed.

### **The Third Date Rule**

My social isolation was pretty much confined to my not having any meaningful contact with any girls at school. Sports in every grade from fifth through high school brought with it social interaction with the boys around me. With the exception of Laurel Kay at Heaton, I had no comparable social interaction with any girls until my Senior year.

I wonder how much differently my life would have turned out if Laurel and I had gone on to Hamilton Junior High and then to Fresno High together. What would it have been like to show up as a Freshman with at least one female friend that had been with me for the previous four years? I can wonder, but that wasn't to be my fate.

My first dating experience as a Senior was with a Sophomore girl named Susan. I gathered the nerve to ask her out and was quite pleased when she said "yes." Going to the movies was the safest date because the bulk of the time would be spent sitting quietly side by side watching the film. Then to a restaurant for a snack and back home again.

There were no seatbelts back then and no bucket seats either, so the acceptable practice as the date progressed and as a measure of the girl's acceptance of the boy, was for the girl to slide right next to the boy and for the boy to put his right arm over her shoulders and then simply drive left-handed. Not exactly the safest way to drive, but car safety back then was not as big a deal as it was to become in the future.

I managed the right arm requirement on the first date, but there was a third date challenge still waiting. The dating rule back then was the third date was the first-kiss date. A couple that had made it all the way to that third-date was now seriously dating and was kissing-ready.

The thought of that first kiss petrified me. What I was afraid of was what everybody at school's reaction would be to how terrible I was at kissing. I didn't know how to go about kissing. And, as soon as I tried to kiss Susan, she would know right then how terrible I was. Then everyone at school would know, as well.

What I had learned from my mother's "If You can't Say Something Nice..." was that no matter how bad I was at kissing, Susan would say how nice it was to me because that's what she was supposed to say. Everybody except me would know her true feelings. And everybody would then be talking about me behind my back.

The third date came. As I walked Susan to her door at the end of that date, I knew what I was expected to do and I simply could not do it. I just turned and walked away. There was no fourth date. I had several first dates with other girls that year but never even a second one.

That whole school year I kissed exactly one girl. Suzy (not Susan) still doesn't know she was my only one. I was invited to a New Year's Eve party and took a first date with me. At midnight when everyone was kissing, I sat next to my date without ever turning for the customary kiss. The one girl I did kiss at that party was a classmate of mine who happened to be the younger sister of twin brothers who were friends of my brother Paul. She simply stopped by, gave me that midnight kiss, and then walked on. Paul told me later that Suzy had called him to tell him how pleased she was to see that I was finally in the social whirl. Little did she know.

Through my therapy sessions, I came to see something I could not see as my Sophomore year started. Why had my clinical depression that had been building all those years waited until I was a Sophomore to reveal itself? Why had I not been depressed as a Freshman? Because now I was a "fraternity man" which, in my own mind, I most definitely wasn't. I now had expectations thrust upon me that I wasn't capable of meeting. I was a social failure and soon everybody would know it.

### **My Oasis**

I convinced Harry not to institutionalize me because, as depressed as I was, I was definitely not suicidal. Even though my depression surprised me, I was always aware of the frustrations and insecurities that ended up overwhelming me. There had, however, always been an oasis in my



life. At least twice each year this oasis freed me from all my troubles and surrounded me with children my age who, when they said something nice about me, I believed them.

In both [Chapter 10 - The Ten No's and Starting from Scratch](#) and [Chapter 13 - The Reading Program - What It Is & Why It Works for Everyone](#) I tell the same [My Cousin Jean](#) story. The key lines from that story as it relates to my oasis is, "I was born in June. My mother's sister had a daughter three months later. My three-month younger Cousin Jean and I spent a lot of baby-time together." That is, of course, true. It is also part of a much bigger story not told in either of those two chapters.

My older brother Paul was born before, my mother's sister, my Aunt Barbara, was married. So, there is no matching cousin for Paul. However, for me and my two younger brothers, there are matching cousins. Each time my mother was pregnant with any of us, she would tell her sister and her sister would then get pregnant. Jean is my matching cousin. Joan is Jack's matching cousin. Jim is Bill's matching cousin. Cousin Jean is named after my mother. I am named after my Aunt Barbara, who was always called "Bobby"

It is true that Cousin Jean and I spent a lot of baby-time together. It remains true for all our lives as well. Pictured below: Bob, Bill, Joan, Jack, Jean, Jim, and Paul.



The picture is of the seven of us at our grandparents where we gathered for every Christmas from before school through college and after. The

seven-on-a-couch picture was an annual Christmas time event, using the same couch, even when Paul and I ended up having to hold Jean and Joan on our laps. In addition to spending every Christmas together, we spent weeks in the Summers together, both in Burlingame with our grandparents and in San Bernardino at my cousins' home. I always regarded my cousins as the sisters and brother we never fought with.

Pictured below a little older now: The same order - Bob, Bill, Joan, Jack, Jean, Jim, and Paul.



So, why were my cousins my oasis? When we were together at Christmas, all seven of us were there at the same time because both sets of parents were there, as well. In Summers, when we visited my cousins in San Bernardino or our grandparents in Burlingame we were always divided, so as not to overwhelm a single set of parents or grandparents with seven children. Paul and I would spend our weeks with Jean and Joan. Jack and Bill would spend their time with Jim.

My world was devoid of female friends other than my cousins except when I was in San Bernardino. In that world, Jean and Joan were my friends, of course, but so were all their other female friends in our same age group. My Aunt Barbara was actively involved in Girl Scouts with her daughters. Both Jean and Joan were also into water ballet, as were their girlfriends. In San Bernardino, there were girls everywhere. Whatever the girls did is what Paul and I did. Paint your finger nails, count me in. Play with paper dolls, me too. Into reading gossip magazines, give me a copy. My cousins' house was like a community center with friends dropping by all the time. Being with my girl cousins was being in a completely different world and I loved it.

In my own world, I had no clue what girls thought of me. In my cousins' world, I knew exactly which girl thought about me because my cousins would tell me and I never had any reason to doubt them. My cousins were not at all like my mother. Who knows what my world have been like if I had managed to have more female friends like Laurel growing up. But at least around my female cousins, that was never a problem. They were my oasis.

### **Work Arounds**

My therapy sessions combined with the eventually faded out tranquilizers helped me overcome my depression, but they didn't make my kissing problem go away. Talking with Harry was never going to fix my problem for me. The problem would persist until I had enough positive experiences to stop doubting myself.

By Spring Quarter I was as normal a student as I thought I was at the start of the school year, but had quickly learned I wasn't. At Spring break that quarter, three of my Sophomore fraternity brothers and I headed to Newport Beach in Southern California to do the classic California Spring Break thing. Newport Beach was the Spring Break party scene for college kids from all over California, just like Miami was for East Coast Spring Breakers.

As a Senior in high school, I learned something about myself right away. When I finally talked myself into asking someone out, if that person did not say yes to the date I suggested because she had something else planned for that day, I would never call that person again. A "no" was taken by me to be a complete rejection. The only exception to my never calling again was if the person turning me down offered a different date for our getting together instead of the one I had proposed.

My approach, or lack thereof, to meeting girls on my Spring break adventure was to not-approach anyone. Not approaching meant never being rejected. The only girls I hung out with were ones who had approached me. When a kissing opportunity presented itself, I never made the first move. Anyone I kissed had assumed the initiative and kissed me first. Getting to first base was the only thing I was shy about. I had no problem with second base and beyond.

What was nice for me about my Spring break adventures is that I didn't have to worry about what any girl I kissed might have to say about me behind my back. Newport Beach was four-hundred miles from Stanford. My failures, if any, would not be following me home. My fear of being talked about behind my back, was quite high when I was in high school because anyone I might date could talk about me to anyone and everyone at school.

This fear did not simply disappear when I was at Stanford. Spring break didn't pose a problem because Newport Beach was so far away. My solution to the potential Stanford problem was simple. Never date a Stanford girl. I had a car now and there were other nearby colleges.

My Oasis was also a dating source. Cousin Jean set me up with a friend of hers from the University of Arizona, who later told Jean that she was going to marry me. She even quit smoking in preparation for the event because Jean told her I didn't date smokers. Cousin Joan introduced me to a San Bernardino friend of hers who had asked to meet me. This person later became a flight attendant and was great company whenever our paths crossed

Depression gone. Work arounds were possible. As long as a woman approached me first and made the first move, anything was possible. I still have never been the initiator of a first kiss because I am still me. But, conveniently enough for me, the women's liberation movement of the 60's made more women comfortable being the approacher.

### **A New Goal**

As a Sophomore, I still had no college major. However in Winter Quarter, I took an Elementary Economics course that I found interesting. I looked into the requirements for an economics major and liked what I found. The basic requirement was forty units of Economics Department courses. Since every course was five units and the average course load for a quarter was fifteen units, the requirements could be satisfied with less than a year's worth of classes, leaving plenty of time for my taking any classes I fancied.

In Spring Quarter, I declared Economics as my major. At the same time I added a third goal to the two I had set for myself as a Freshman. The Economics Department had an Honors in Economics degree option. To receive an Honors in Economics degree, one had to maintain a B average and add one five unit Junior and two five unit Senior Seminars to the forty units already required. Each seminar would require the writing of its own fifty or so page research paper.

The reason for my first two goals I set as a freshman was to give my father his money's worth for my Stanford education. Now, in addition to paying for my education, he was also paying for my rather expensive psychiatric care. It was all out of pocket. Not a penny covered by any kind of insurance. My father has graduated cum laude (with distinction) from Stanford. My brothers and I had all seen the "cum laude" printed on his framed degree. There was no way I was going to graduate cum laude considering my poor first two quarters as a Freshman and my much worse first two quarters as a Sophomore. Since cum laude was

not realistic, I added Honors in Economics to my goals of giving my father his money's worth for my Stanford education.

### **Spring Quarter - Return to Normalcy**

In the Fall Quarter I had my worst quarter at Stanford in all my years there, eleven units of C's. By the Spring Quarter, I was back to normal with more A's than C's. For every quarter after that, with one exception, my A's outnumbered my C's, allowing me to reach my goal of a B average for all four years. That one exception was Winter Quarter of my Senior year, when my eight of A units were out done by my nine C units.

I was off the tranquilizers and my therapy sessions were now down to once a week. Life was so normal now that I was back to working part time jobs again, something I had not done in either of the previous two quarters. Tom Haynie found me a nice lifeguard position for the Fremont Hills Country Club in the nearby town of Los Altos Hills.

### **Water Polo – Once Gone, Now Back Again.**

In the [High School - Senior Year – The Best Year](#) section of this chapter I mentioned that Stanford had once had and then discontinued a water polo program. I also mentioned being invited to tryout for the San Francisco Olympic Club's water polo team. One of the players I met at the Olympic Club was Jim Gaughran. Jim had had been captain of its 1953-54 team. So the discontinuation had taken place sometime during the time I was in high school.

For whatever the reason had been, the discontinuing was about to end. Stanford had been part of the Pacific Coast Conference (PCC). The PCC was in the process of breaking up and Stanford was now to be in the newly formed Pac-5 Conference. Pac-5 would eventually grow to be the Pac-8, the Pac-10 and then the Pac-12. One of the requirements the new conference imposed on itself was that all schools had to compete in all the major sports. To meet this requirement, Stanford had to add water polo back to its Varsity sports teams.

I had signed up for varsity swimming for the Fall Quarter. After my depression took over, I explained to Tom Haynie why I wasn't exactly ready to compete right then. Winter Quarter was the only quarter in all my time at Stanford that I took no Physical Education course. For the Spring Quarter I had to choose between swimming and water polo. I chose water polo.

In my Senior year in High School, I decided I was a swimmer. I only went out for water polo because so many of my swimming friends played. Now, the situation was reversed. The friends from high school who were now with me at Stanford viewed themselves as water polo players, not

swimmers. Once I chose water polo, I asked my grandfather who enjoyed building things as one of his many hobbies, to make a water polo cage for my family's back yard pool. Now, I could practice all Summer.



### **Three IFs**

IFs take us from where we thought we were going to where we ended up. There are occasions when we can identify an IF as it is happening. Even so, we will not know its effect until time has passed. As an example, if I am unexpectedly fired from my job, the IF of “IF I had not been fired” is immediately identifiable. But the ultimate effect of that IF will only reveal itself over time.

More commonly, though we cannot identify an IF as it is happening. An IF is a turning point. If this had not happened, then what ultimately followed would also not have happened, and our lives would have taken a completely different path. The Clinical Depression of my Sophomore year brought with it two IFs. One was an unexpected accomplishment. The other would turn out to be a whole new purpose for my life.

**The First IF** did not make itself apparent until my Stanford academic career had come to an end and I was waiting to receive my degree. Since I had delayed my graduation for a year, I was now in the graduating class of 1962 instead of 1961. In late Spring of 1962 the Stanford Daily Newspaper published an article with the headline “Distinction Given 20% Graduates.” The article began, “As a recognition of high scholastic achievement, the University awards the Bachelor’s degree with “Great Distinction” to approximately five percent and with “Distinction” to approximately fifteen percent of the graduating class.

There was a GREAT DISTINCTION list of students followed by a DISTINCTION list. If the lists had been for my actual Class of 1961, then I would have checked it out to see which of my classmates were on it, but it wasn't, so I didn't. However, I was informed by my fraternity brothers who did read the lists, that my name was included in the Distinction list. My presence on that list made no sense to me at all. How could my straight B average over all four years have put me in the top 20% of Stanford graduates? That simply wasn't possible.

Reading the article, which I then did, provided the explanation. The lead sentence of the second paragraph said, "These awards are based primarily on the work of the last two years." My depression as a Sophomore had depressed my grades, as well. The extra effort I had made in my Junior and Senior years to correct for my Sophomore slump meant that my GPA for the two years that were used to determine Distinction was quite a bit better than the straight B average that had been my four-year goal.

IF I had not been depressed my Sophomore year, my diploma would not have read: Bachelor of Arts - with Distinction – with all the Rights, Privileges and Honors thereunto appertaining. My "with Distinction" was equivalent to my father's "cum laude". The two goals I set for myself at the beginning of my Freshman year were aimed at giving my father his money's worth for having paid for my Stanford education. I had reached my first two goals and had added an Honors in Economics certificate and a surprise cum laude. I had given my father his money's worth for my Stanford education.

I had always wondered how my father had managed to graduate from Stanford with cum laude written on his degree. He spend his Freshman and Sophomore years at San Mateo Junior College. His time at Stanford was only for his Junior and Senior years. I now had my answer.

**The Second IF** was the life altering IF that would, within three years, give me a whole new purpose in life. I learned as I was battling my depression, the lasting effect my years as an unhappy student had on me. It never occurred to me throughout my time with Harry that any of my teachers could have helped me overcome the difficulties I was facing. Were any of my teachers even aware of my problems? And, if they were, could they have done anything to help me?

Working at a part-time job in my Senior year, I discovered that I could change how children felt about themselves and about each other. In the final section of this Chapter, [The First In-between Year - A New Direction](#), I describe my time as an age-group swimming coach. I found in that job, as well, that I could change how children felt about

themselves and each other. My involvement as a coach was so rewarding that it caused me to alter my career plans. I now wanted to make changing how children felt about themselves my life's purpose.

No one had helped me as a child. No one even seemed to recognize I had a lasting problem. I had assumed that there was nothing that any adult who was not my parent could have done. Now I knew better. The adult me could have helped the child me. It was too late for that to happen. But the adult me could help children like I had been. It was not too late for that to happen.

I knew quite well by now that my problems had started in the classroom. I definitely wanted to be an age-group swimming coach and teacher hours matched perfectly with the hours my little swimmers would be swimming. So, I could help children as a coach and as a teacher, too. I decided to teach fifth grade because that grade had been the starting point for all of my school problems.

The depression I experienced in my Sophomore year turned out to be the first step in my deciding to become a teacher. This IF took three years to show its effect. The effect once shown, changed my life forever and the lives of countless children.

**The Third IF** in this chapter is the water polo IF. The fact that I played water polo would turn out to be a major factor in my deciding to become a teacher and in everything else Mary and I accomplished in the field of education. For water polo to have had the effect it did, its many IFs had to occur in just the right order. The water polo IF that would be the essential IF to my becoming a teacher was that Stanford waited until my Junior year before any water polo matches were scheduled.

### **Something I learned About Myself**

In the Summer between my Sophomore and Junior years in college, Howie, my friend from high school who was now one of my fraternity brothers, hired me as his assistant. Howie had been hired as the head swim instructor for the Barron Park/Loma Vista PTA Summer Swimming Program. I was to be his assistant for this six-week long adventure.

Nearly all of the children in the PTA Summer Program were already swimmers. Howie's responsibility was to do for these children what I had done for the Coaching Camp kids the previous Summer - improve their skills and increase their range of swimming strokes. My responsibility was to turn the few non-swimmers into swimmers.

The PTA Program was divided into three two-week sessions. During the first session, I worked with two five year-old girls who were the only non-



swimmers present. By the second week they were both good enough swimmers that I felt they were ready to swim the width of the rather wide pool without stopping. Neither girl had swum that far before and each was now a bit fearful of the swimming distance required of them. The depth of the pool where they were to make their crossing was over their heads but shallow enough for me to walk along side them.

As the first girl was making her swim, I walked along side her. Every time she looked like she was ready to give up and turn to me to be carried, I leaned over her and shouted for her to keep going. When she reached the other side she popped her head up and was smiling with delight at her accomplishment.

Before the second girl made her swim, I talked with her at length about how she would be feeling during her swim. I told her that she would feel like quitting and having me carry her the rest of the way. I also told her what she should tell herself whenever she had that feeling. I then walked along side of her, without ever shouting at her to keep going. She, too, swam the width without stopping. And, she too, popped her head up, and was smiling with delight at her accomplishment.

What I knew was that if I had simply talked to the first girl in advance and never shouted at her during her swim, she would have stopped long before completing her width-of-pool challenge. What I also knew was that if I had not talked to the second girl in advance and instead simply resorted to shouting, she would have quit her swim early and ended up crying.

What I learned about myself that Summer was to trust my judgment about individual children. What works for one will not necessarily work for another. It is okay to treat each child differently, because each child is a different person.