

Twenty-Seven IFs in Life On My Path to Becoming a Teacher Junior Year – The Invisible Team and The Challenge and Two IFs

Water Polo – The Invisible Team

Tom Haynie was Stanford's second swimming coach ever. He coached from 1947 through the spring of 1960. Tom was one of the most successful swimming coaches ever, with a dual meet record of 84 wins against only 9 losses. Tom was also the water polo coach. This meant he had been the water polo coach when the sport was discontinued. He would be its coach again for his last year at Stanford.

The team was added back into Stanford's athletic program as Tom was beginning his last year there. It is not at all surprising then, that the team did not receive the same attention it might have from a coach who expected to be around for more than one season.

As Stanford students were enrolling for classes at the beginning of each quarter, the enrollment process included every student receiving that quarter's calendar of the major events on campus. All varsity athletic events, student performances, celebrations, conferences, on-campus Sunday night movies, and so on, were listed there. Absent from the calendar for that 1959 Fall Quarter was any mention of Stanford's Varsity Water Polo Team or any of its competitions.

Since my Sophomore year's Spring Quarter, I had known there would be a water polo team in the Fall. There had been a water polo team option along side the swim team option in the P.E. course offerings that Spring. But there was never any formal announcement made and no effort had been made by anyone in the athletic department to recruit players. There was also no official team tryout notice posted anywhere. The existence of a varsity water polo team was passed around more like a rumor. Knowing to show up for the first practice was more a function of who you knew and if they happened to tell you. There was no Freshman water polo team at all. Zero Freshmen were being trained to join the team the next year.

We also learned that our water polo team was only to be allotted seven varsity letters for its seven first-string players. I earned my varsity letter in high school because I played often enough in the season's games to accumulate the required minutes of playing time. I had never heard of any team in any sport that only awarded letters to the starting lineup. The final measure of how little attention Tom, or anyone else in authority was paying to the fledgling water polo program was the Sports Section of the Stanford Yearbook. For the 1959-1960 school year there was no mention made or picture included for our varsity water polo team.

This first year we were invisible. However, by my Junior year I was back to my normal self. Normal me was determined that we would never again go unseen. By year-two, we were definitely noticed. By year-three, water polo was so visible that the Sports Section of the 1961-1962 Stanford Yearbook was fronted by a full two-page color photo of Stanford's Varsity Water Polo Team in action.

No Plan for the Future

Many college majors, like Medicine or Engineering or Education, coincide with a student's plans for his or her post-college career. I had selected my Economics major because it gave me the freedom to take any classes that interested me. However, I had no idea of what kind of job I wanted once I graduated.

Because I had no idea what I wanted to do in life after college, I took myself to the college's counseling service and asked for their guidance. To help me plan a future for myself, a counselor there had me take the Kuder Preference Test. The Kuder Preference Test is designed to measure the motivation of high school and college students, to assist counselors in providing them vocational guidance. The test analyzes career interests, skills, confidence, and work values to assist in determining career choices, to help the test-taker identify and plan a pathway to fulfilling career choices.

I took the test. The test's results showed I had no interests. Actually, my test results indicated two possible career paths for me based on the answers I had given. First, a Professor of Philosophy. Second, a Church Minister. Those two choices were, in my view, equivalent to having no interests. What kind of career choice would it be for me to be a professor in a field in which I had only taken one class. In my Sophomore year I took an Introduction to Philosophy course. That class did not inspire me to take any other courses in Philosophy.

In [Chapter 5 - Working With Children](#), there are five different courses listed that I took at Stanford related specifically to child education, simply because I was interested in them. Also noted is the fact that I wrote six different papers describing my observations of children in their classrooms or in their homes in conjunction with these five courses.

Even though I took these classes because they interested me, at that point in my life I was completely unaware of any actual interest I might have in educating children. However, in retrospect, I wonder just how good the Kuder Preference Test was at assisting others in making career choices when it missed my interest in education entirely.

As for being a minister, Sunday School was briefly a part of my childhood. Briefly because one Sunday my Sunday School teacher told us that people who smoked cigarettes were sinners. I told her that my mother smoked a cigarette every morning with her cup of coffee, and my father joined her in smoking on Saturday. Were my parents sinners? That caused my parents to end my Sunday School experience.

In the process of my brother Paul and me becoming Eagle Scouts we both had to get recommendations from a minister. My father asked a minister friend of his to add us to his congregation for long enough for him to give us the needed recommendation. Paul and I did attend church religiously every Sunday as required, until we had earned the needed recommendation. That was the beginning and the end of my church attendance. Not a good start for a career as a minister.

The Law School Story

A Fraternity brother friend of mine who was a Junior like me told me he was going to apply to Stanford Law School for early admission. He had learned that up to five percent of each Law School class were Juniors like himself who had applied for and been granted early admission. If accepted, he would be spending his Senior year in Law School. He didn't just say he was going to apply to Law School. He said that I couldn't. He said his Poly Sci professor was going to recommend him for early admission. Who on the faculty did I know who I could get to recommend me? I said my Water Polo Coach. I can still hear his laughter.

It might sound like this was a mean spirited exchange. He knew I was a pretty good student and not that bad at water polo either. He was just enjoying boasting about something he was going to be good at that I wasn't. A little ego boost for himself. So, what the heck, I had no idea what I wanted to do anyway and I liked my friend's unintended challenge. I applied for early admission to Stanford Law School and, of course, had my Water Polo Coach recommend me.

I have always been a good standardized test-taker. The standardized tests I had taken seemed pretty much the same to me. Some math, which I am good at. Some vocabulary, which I know a lot of. My father, who was an English major at Stanford, was good at adding words to his children's vocabularies. Some reading comprehension. No big deal.

The law school exam was quite different than any other exam I had ever taken and I really enjoyed taking it. It was just plain fun. No math or vocabulary questions that I can remember. Reading things and figuring out what they meant. Not simple comprehension questions. Questions, the answers to which required logical thinking.

When I took the SAT for college admissions, no students taking the test were ever told their scores. We never knew if we had done well or poorly. Our results were sent straight to the universities to which we were applying. When I was a Senior in high school, one of my fellow students in my Math 4 class had his SAT math score revealed. He had scored a perfect 800, so his result was reported nationally.

I mentioned that the name of the math class I was taking as a Senior was Math 4. As Freshmen, our two math-class choice were either Algebra or General Math. If you picked General Math, you took Algebra the next year and Geometry the year after that. The only two math classes we were required for graduation were Algebra and Geometry. Pretty much everybody stopped taking math classes after Geometry.

For students like me, who took Algebra as a Freshman (where I met a lot of Sophomores) and Geometry as a Sophomore, the next math class was simply called Math 3, and the one after that, Math 4. There were four hundred forty-four students in my Senior class. There were only twenty-five students in my Math 4 class and it was the only Math 4 class given. And, as a footnote, the student who had the perfect SAT score was a B student in that Math 4 class.

I graduated from high school in 1957, the same year the Russians beat the USA into space with the launch of the Sputnik satellite. In our country's rush to catch up, quite a few rules were changed. One change was that SAT scores were now given to students. Once scored could be known, students no longer waited until their Senior year to take their SAT. They began taking the SAT as Juniors or even Sophomores for practice and a whole new industry of SAT prep classes was created.

I mentioned that when I took the SATs for college admission I was never told my scores. I still don't know what mine were. But 1957 changed the rules. When I took the law school exam I was sent my test results. The score came as a percentage. My score was 93.5%

Apparently 93.5% was a pretty good score. It and my Water Polo Coach's recommendation were good enough to get me accepted for early admission to Stanford Law School for my Senior year. Applying in response to an unintended challenge was one thing. Skipping my Senior year was quite another. I asked the Law School to delay my admission.

Two Law School Seminars

I had enjoyed taking the Law School entrance exam. That enjoyment made me curious to see if Law School itself might be as interesting as it's admission test had been. I found that there was a genuine Law School seminar being taught by an actual Law School professor in the Law

School complex that was open for enrollment to Seniors with Law School ambitions. I applied for seminar and was accepted. The seminar had ten students in it. The focus of a regular law school class is on the professor's lecture. The focus of the seminar is on case law discussions.

Our course book for the seminar was a casebook manuscript our professor was preparing for publication. Reviewing and analyzing a compilation of actual past legal cases and judicial opinions, or case law, is the primary manner of studying and learning law in law schools. The actual compilation of past legal cases and opinions that students will use for a law school class or seminar is called a casebook. For many courses in law school, the casebook is the only textbook. This method of studying actual judicial opinions to learn legal rules and develop the ability to think like a lawyer is called the Case Method.

For our seminar, we would be assigned a number of cases and opinions to read in advance of each session. Our seminar time would then be spent giving our opinions of what we felt each case decided and then learning how far off we were in our conclusions. "Far off" became less common as we gradually learned to "think like a lawyer."

Law 104A - Law in Society was taught in Winter Quarter. Law 104B - Law in Society was taught in Spring Quarter. I took both seminars. The Kuder Preference Test had not discovered any useful interests for me. My response to an unintended challenge had discovered a definite interest for me. I was now very much looking forward to Law School and a career as a lawyer

Working on a Weakness

In [Chapter 4 - Working With Children](#). I say that I had only one job from 1955 through 1964 that did not involve interacting with children. I then described that one job.

My description: In the Summer of 1960, several of my fraternity brothers, including my brother Jack, and I became traveling salesmen for a waterless cookware company. Our job was to roam from town to town up and down the State of California seeking out single working women at their places of employment and convincing them to let us make a cookware presentation to them. We earned commissions from the cookware we sold.

Not mentioned in [Chapter 4](#) is made of why I chose to become a traveling salesman rather than pursuing the life guard/swimming instructor options that presented themselves to me during that time period. I was now fully recovered from my bout of depression. I had also managed to do the whole Spring Break thing as a Sophomore. However, my contact

with girls of my generation was still limited. For this particular traveling salesman job my target audience was to be single women of my own age group. In social situations, I remained passive. Girls still had to take the initiative. However, if I was to make any money selling cookware, I would have to learn to take the initiative. I felt it would be good practice for me in becoming less passive.

In Pitch Perfect, one of my favorite movies, this line in the final Bella's song has always stuck with me. "When the sale comes first and the truth comes second." This line is actually from the song Price Tag by Jessie J. The reason the lyric sticks with me is because it represents just how I was taught to be a cookware salesman. We were all taught to lie. The first lie was that we were to say to the girls to whom we were making our presentations that the only payment we received for any sales we made was in the form of points earned towards a college scholarship for ourselves. This cookware company's sales force was composed of young men recruited from college campuses to lend credence to its scholarship lie.

There were other lies we were taught, as well. For me, though, the commission lie was the worst one. We were definitely on commission, as were the people supervising us, and the people supervising our supervisors, and so on. Fully half the price of the cookware went towards all of our commissions.

We were trained as salesmen in the Spring. The bulk of our selling time was in the Summer. Since we made our own appointments and conducted our presentations by ourselves, I didn't need to worry about anyone finding out that I had tossed out the company's sales pitch and made up my own. The only trick I carried over from the company's presentation to the one I actually made was in how to get the pen for signing the contract into the girl's hand at signing time.

At the beginning of every presentation I would say that I would earn a commission if the girl ended up buying anything from me. However, I used the commission as a positive. The cookware I was selling was definitely expensive. I would ask the girl to imagine how much more expensive it would be if it were sold in stores. Then, the overhead of the store's building and all the stores employees would have to be factored in. My commission was less overhead than any store's built in costs.

My brother Jack was far better at making appointment, but he didn't make that many sales. I was not as good at making appointments, but I had a 100% success rate of selling at every appointment. Jack used the company's selling script for his presentations. I used the one I made up. For selling, or for anything else, the truth does not have to come second.

I was discussing my time as a salesman with a female friend of one of my fraternity brothers when we were all back at school in that Fall. She said she couldn't believe girls out there in the working world would actually buy full sets of cookware and China (we sold dishes, too) from random salesmen just showing up where they worked.

I asked her if she would like to see a presentation. I promised I would not really make her buy anything. She laughed and said "Yes." At the end of my presentation, I had to talk her out of wanting to buy a set of cookware. What she learned, though, was that the working girls out there were not quite as stupid for buying cookware for themselves as she had imagined. She also learned I had created a pretty good presentation.

The Two IFs

The two IFs of my Junior year were water polo and the unintended challenge

I said in the [College - Sophomore – Clinical Depression](#) section of this chapter that the water polo IF that would be essential to my becoming a teacher was that Stanford waited until my Junior year before any water polo matches were scheduled. As will be made clear later in this chapter, IF water polo was either still being played when I entered Stanford or had started at any time other than my Junior year, I would have become a lawyer and not a teacher.

The unintended Law School challenge set me on a path to becoming a lawyer. However, it also turned out to be a most essential IF in my becoming a teacher instead. With or without my plan to go to Law School, the water polo IF would still have caused me to delay my graduation from college to play on the varsity team with my two brothers.

However, IF there had been no Law School in my future, then after water polo season ended, I would have sought full-time, career-building employment of some kind, and definitely not as a teacher. The fact that I had to wait for the start of Law school the following September meant that I would only need temporary employment while waiting. That waiting time and that temporary job is what turned me into a teacher.