

Moorings, It All Starts Somewhere

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As a youth, I had been involved with Boy Scouts and began teaching other teenagers at age eleven. Following high school, I began my studies at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). I lost my connection with kids during the next few years to focus on getting a Bachelor's Degree in Biological Science, which decades later, would serve as my doorway to a teaching degree. University life was a blur. The competition for grades was intense. Many of our main classes were held in the Biology Lecture Hall that sat about 400 students. You were one of many and your success or failure lay firmly in your own hands. Second quarter General Chemistry was a disaster for me. I had taken Chemistry in high school from Mr. Quartucci, who was a great guy, but he had the habit of teaching new concepts and then saying, "But there are some exceptions." He never got around to telling us what the exceptions were. During first year college chemistry, it seems that all the exceptions came up, and I was clueless what the Chemistry professor was talking about. I landed a "D" for the second quarter and was stunned. The only time I earned a "D" was for 9th grade typing. The typing class was more about finger coordination, and I didn't feel too bad about it, but a bad grade in Chemistry for a science major was a different thing.

Admittedly, a major distractor in my life, starting in late high school and carrying all the way through college, was the distaff side. I paid way too much attention to girls and my school work suffered. Thus, my undergrad GPA was not good enough to get into an American medical

school, but I did get accepted at the medical school of the Autonomous University of Guadalajara, Mexico.

I finished my coursework at the UCI one quarter early, and it was during this time that my girlfriend and I first visited The Mustard Tree Christian beach ministry. Here is where kids came back into my life, as the focus of the group was to minister to youth from broken homes, the drug addicted and the Jesus freak culture. It was the time of Calvary Chapel and Pastor Chuck Smith with the big tent church in Costa Mesa, California. The Mustard Tree family ministered to my needs with much prayer and support, as I also became closer in my relationship to Jesus. But before too long, I was off to Guadalajara, missing the graduation ceremonies at UCI to take Spanish language classes before medical school began in Fall. Indeed, the only Spanish I knew was, “sí,” “no,” and “¿Dónde está el baño?” – “yes,” “no” and “Where is the bathroom?” How I expected to learn enough Spanish before med school started, I have no idea, and yet it all worked out.

If I had been mentally, emotionally and physically healthy during my stay in Mexico, I could have pushed through the five years it would take to become a doctor, but in each of those areas, I was sick. One afternoon at med school, I was feeling ill, and told my roommates that I was heading back to the house, which was only a block away. By the time they came home that day, it was obvious that I was ailing. Fortunately, one of them knew of the Mexican-American Hospital and they loaded me into the car for the trip down town. I could barely walk assisted up the steps of the hospital, being dehydrated with pain in my lower right abdomen. This was about 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon. As a medical student, I had already diagnosed the problem, but

there was no doctor in the hospital to exam me. And thus, I lay writhing in pain in a hospital bed until 9 PM when an American trained Mexican doctor arrived at the hospital. He began to palpate my abdomen, beginning in the upper right quadrant and moving clockwise around to the lower right. With that I screamed appropriately and he said, "You are a medical student, aren't you?" "Yes," I responded, "So you know what this is, don't you?" he acknowledged, referring to my appendicitis, "Yes, just do it!" I shouted. Before long, I was prepped, anesthetized and under the knife. The appendix had nearly burst, then it wouldn't have been a routine surgery, but a life-threatening contamination of my entire entrails with peritonitis. The odds of recovering from that in Mexico in 1973 would have been slim, at best. Shortly after leaving the recovery room, I became jaundiced, an indication there was something wrong with my liver. I had an allergic reaction to the anesthesia halothane, which kept me a few more days at the hospital. I tried to get life back to normal, but as long as I remained in Mexico, I did not fully recover from the liver reaction. After two more hospital visits, it was obvious my time in Guadalajara had ended. I called home and told my disappointed parents I was still sick and had to give up medical school and return home. I was hospitalized upon returning to the States, and eventually went back to the Mustard Tree at the beach and moved in, becoming a member of the ministry team.

The Mustard Tree resided in Newport Beach, California for 22 months, until by a series of miraculous events, God moved us to Vista in San Diego County. We ministered to many children and families over 35 years, both to our own children as well as guests that came to us for help. At the height of things, we had a dozen of our own children, plus whoever was there temporarily. These experiences helped to form my love of teaching and mentoring children. In

those years, I spent time as a Scout leader for my son's units, a tennis scorekeeping coordinator for a WTA tournament in La Costa, CA, where my daughter was a ball kid, and a Cadet Training Officer for Civil Air Patrol, USAF Auxiliary, where one of our Community kids and her father were members. There have been few years since I was 9-years-old that I haven't been directly connected to a youth organization or school of some sort. These streams have run together to form the river that runs through me, that waters and refreshes many children in my life now. These years serve as a firm mooring for my ship, knowing I belong to the Lord Jesus. I am truly blest to now be a middle school science and shop teacher at Bellevue Christian School in Clyde Hill, Washington. Each day is a delight to be with "my kids," and to help them learn, expand their understanding of the world and grow into healthy and responsible young men and women who will take over when I am gone. We are all connected spiritually, so when I teach, I am teaching God's children and I expect to see them all again in another Life.