

In the Beginning:

It was in September of 2011 about a month after our mother's memorial service in Oakville, Ontario. Mary Margaret Herstad, known as "Margie", passed at the early age of 73. I awoke in the middle of the night, got up, put on my housecoat and slippers, made my way down stairs to the dining room table. I opened my lap top to look at my mother's Facebook page. I perused the pictures and comments and then did something that started me on a fascinating journey that has blown my mind. I typed and posted these words on Mom's page " A book will be published one day and a movie will be made of this special lady". I am not sure why I typed that statement. I never thought of myself as a writer. Sure, I have done some poetry at times but never thought I was capable of writing a book. I went back to bed and forgot about it.

As I wrote the above paragraph I became aware of something I should share with you. I am someone who loves sleep. I love my rest. I am a proud mid-day napper and will debate its positive affect on my life with anyone. So when I say that I awoke and got out of bed half way into the night, that, is a big deal.

A couple of weeks, prior to that night, I picked up my youngest sister, Julie, in my company truck. We left her home in the tiny town of Belfountain, about an hour north, west of Toronto, Canada. it was a Sunday drive thru the rolling country hills in this area of Caledon region. As we made our way along the meandering road thru river valleys, creeks, fields and trees, we discussed what happened at mom's memorial service. A couple people approached our family to thank us for having a mother who helped them. These individuals were two of many who spent some time in our house back in the 1970's, 80's, into the 90's. It was quite the reunion, seeing them again. Although our mother was a widow at thirty eight with four children she always had room for someone in need of attention, someone who came across her path or her children's path. Our spare bedroom was rarely empty. They came for a short stay, some stayed longer.

It was during that drive that Julianne and I made a list of eighteen names we could remember of those who did take the spare bedroom. We wrote their names down on a piece of paper from the glove box. I said "Julie, let's go find them. Interview them on how the time they spent in our home and their relationship with mom affected their life".

It took us three years but thru social media and word of mouth all interviews were conducted, Some of these people wrote us a letter as well. I have always had a deep respect for my mother but hearing these people respond to our questions took it to a whole other level. I knew this was a story that needed to be told. We discussed that Julie was going to write the book and I, with my marketing experience, was going to help with sales.

Three months after all interviews were completed Julie was not responding to my phone calls. I decided to drive the thirty minutes on country roads to her home and see what was up. When I knocked on the front door of her small cottage style bungalow, Julie opened the door. I could see she was upset. We went in and sat in her living room. She said "I don't know what it is but I cannot write a paragraph. I am letting you and mom down. I don't know what to do?" I replied after a long pause by saying "It's ok. The three years of work is not going away. I will figure this out".

On the half hour ride back to my house I thought "What did I just get myself into?". I have my own business as a lighting designer. Do I have time for this? How do I even start something like this? I pulled into my country home driveway, stopped the car. I took a couple breathes, opened the driver door and made my way up the back steps into the house. I walked directly to the dinning room table without taking off my shoes, sat down and Googled "How do I write a book?". One of the listings that came up was a U-Tube video of James Patterson. I clicked on the video and it was as if he was speaking into my soul. He said these words "Dont' worry about the the words, the paragraph or the page, just tell the story!" I stopped the video, closed the lap top. I sat back in the chair. I thought to myself "I can tell stories". I kicked off my shoes, carried them to the back door, placed them on the mud mat, upstairs to bed I went.

A couple of nights later I awoke at 3am on the dot. The story in my head woke me up. My brain actively grappled with it until I realized something. I have to purge it out of my head if I am going to get any sleep at all. Up I got and down I went to the ground floor of this 1922 farm house to my lap top on the dinning room table. This happened for the next three weeks. Other times I took the lap top up into the loft at the top of the house. It is almost a vertical climb to get up those stairs and you have to come down backwards holding the railing on both sides of the staircase. It was up in this big window at each end, 10' x 20' rectangular space that I posted and pinned the pages of the stories and the interviews on all four walls. This allowed me to change the order of the stories, stand back to see what stories needed more detail. I used pink paper, my mom's favourite colour. Sometimes it took twenty minutes to get the story out, other times it took a couple hours. Once the story was purged I was able to get back to bed. Thank God I work for myself so was able to accommodate a flexible schedule.

The experience I had writing these stories was non emotional. It was as if it was coming to me too quickly to think about it. Directly from thought to my fingers and typed out. I was a conduit. The emotion came later during a reread for an early self edit and did it come. These were the times I purged the emotion. The worst of the emotion came when I reread the early family stories, specifically the ones about my father. Having to recall the event when I was six years old and jumped on his back to protect my mother. As I edited this story it was as thou I was seeing my six year old self on that gravel driveway. I saw my mom. I saw my dad. I saw my two sisters standing in front of the main door to the house. The scene replayed in my mind over and over. The emotion was brutal. At one point I found myself on my knees.

Then I wondered what I would say to that little boy. I think I would tell him that it is not ok for him to have to protect his mom at that young age. I would tell him that it was good that he acted. That I understand that type of fear. But he pushed thru it because someone had to do something. I would tell him I was proud of him. I would say that I am here for him. I would take him by the hand and walk him back into the house. Help him change his pyjamas and wash the blood from the bottom of his feet with a damp face cloth. I would help him get back into bed. I would tell him that everything is going to be alright.

As I wrote the last paragraph it occurred to me that it was a marvellous benefit to me to write these stories out of my mind. I was able to revisit so many events from my life and see myself as separate to who I am today. I could now see those events without the fear and chaos. I felt lighter and more buoyant after the emotion purging while editing.

There was also an experiences of pride and joy in the emotion of rereading. The wonderful family stories we all shared. Trailering together, fishing together, having a father who coached me in a game that I loved. Having a mother that always helped me know I was loved. Understand others thoughts and praise for my mother. These were the happy tears.

Then I had an Oprah "AHHA moment". It was in the remembering of all those times when I was young, recalling to myself "These are challenging times. We are in survival mode here". But looking back on it now it was not at all that. It was just our family journey. Those were wonderful, amazing times. Everything always worked out; Because we had each other. We weathered the storm as a team, all of us did our individual role with love and commitment to each other. I was so grateful for all the family history, every moment. It was like a gift of time I was recalling.

All and all, writing about my family, childhood, then my mom and the experiences she shared with others was very cathartic. I recommend it for anyone wanting to know what thoughts and emotions may be trapped in their subconscious perhaps holding them back from a better life; Or maybe just for someone who would like to know how to be more appreciative regarding their own past and where they come from.

It all boils down to story telling. And everyone has a story.

As Frank McCourt, author of Angela's Ashes said, "Sing your song. Dance you're dance. Tell your tale."

I have always been a story teller. That is what a sales career offered me. It is the transfer of a thought or an idea with a positive outcome. I recalled James Paterson expressing a great thought I held onto in my mind as I wrote.

He said, "When I write, I picture someone sitting in the seat beside me. I am telling them a story. I want the story to be so compelling that that person cannot leave the chair until I am finished telling it".

1 - Meeting Tristan

In the early stages of this project, Jules and I were out celebrating a 50th birthday party. We entered the restaurant and made our way to the big table with the balloons at the back right corner. No need to ask the greeting girl where the party was, it was obvious. Many familiar faces I had not seen in years as this was a group of people I lost touch with years ago; Milestone birthdays tend to create reunions with people in our lives. As we made our way thru the birthday crowd to a couple empty seats I realized there was no waiters or waitresses in the immediate area. I pulled a chair out for Jules. As she took her seat I leaned into her ear and said, "I will go get us a drink from the main bar". It was far less busy over in that area.

I got to the centre of the bar, removed my wallet, place it in front of me to get the bartender's attention. A man standing to my right noticed me walking over from the crowded table and realized I must be with the birthday crowd.

He said, "Hi, I am Tristan. How do you know Frank?"

I replied, "Hi, I am Tom, I have known Frank since about eighteen years old. You?"

Tristan said, "I am on a first date with a lady who was Frank's first wife".

As we waited for service Tristan asked me what I do for a living. I replied by saying "I am a lighting guy specializing in low voltage". He responded by sharing with me his independent book publishing business. He continued to describe how he was also a video producer and a solo singer who does lots of Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin songs. He came across as a very interesting, educated guy. He went on to describe a book he was working on with a politician from the Ottawa area of Canada. He described the book as a rant against the establishment. Once he finished briefing me on his book project, I expressed that I was working on a book about how my mother lived her life.

Tristan asked "What makes your mother so unique that you would write about her?"

I answered by saying "Mom was a widow at 38 but always had room for someone in need. After she passed in 2011 (last year), my sister and I decided to go find eighteen people who spent time in our home during the late 1970's to the mid 90's for an interview. We want to ask them how the time in our house and their relationship with our mother impacted their lives." I expressed that we had already conducted three of the interviews.

Tristan said "Love it. Tell me more" After sharing a few stories from the interviews he said "You are onto something. What a great message. Most of the writing projects I have participated in have been mostly negative story telling; A shot against the establishment. I would love to help you out if I can. It would be so refreshing to be part of a positive message story".

This was one of those moments in this journey that created a rush of energy inside me. Here was an experienced independent publisher interested in the work we were doing; starting something new that I have never done before has many doubting moments attached to it. It is this kind of feedback that was music to my ears. His response filled my motivation tank to the top.

At this point we had to shut our conversation down and make our way back to the birthday with the drinks for the ladies. We exchanged business cards later during the final goodbyes of the evening.

A couple days later I connect with Tristan on a phone call. As a result of that call, Tristan attended a meeting with my sister and I to help with input into the way we were approaching and conducting the interviews. Tristan even sat in on a couple interviews and videoed them for us. He was a great help getting this project further along.

2 - Publicity Summit

It was Spring 2016 when I attend a publicity summit in New York City. I wanted to talk about this story with media contacts to see their reaction to it. It was an exercise for me to find fuel to feed this dream. The company is called Bradley Group out of Philadelphia. Steven Harrison's company help people connect with all sorts of different media to create exposure to the public. The media contacts included news paper columnists, free lance writers, tv show producers, radio hosts, magazine editors, movie directors/producers. These are people that can change your life overnight if they like your idea, your pitch. It can lead to your story going "Viral".

I arrived in Manhattan, New York, two days before the media contacts are introduced to the group. This event took place in the Pensilvania Hotel at the top of the building in the large meeting rooms. For the first two days all sixty participants are coached on how to express their idea, book, product or your business to the media representatives. There are a series of exercises you do individually and in pairs to hone your messaging. The pitch is two and a half minutes maximum. It is how I verbally package the reason this book was an idea in the first place and why it should matter. I also had to confirm which media contacts I wanted to target. The list identified my top priority media people of the 115 total media contacts in attendance. I ranked my first pick with a #1 and continue until finished at #60.

It was day three at 9 a.m., "Pitch Day". All media contacts enter the largest open meeting room on the penthouse floor and have positioned themselves around the perimeter with their own station. Some of them remain standing, some sit, some lean on a lounge chair. The participants line up start in front of each media member, behind a two foot by two foot masking taped outline of a square box on the carpet floor. The way this works is if you are standing in a five person lineup as third in line to pitch a particular media contact and that media person is #10 on your priority list, you remain in position three unless another participant shows up with that media contact as their #9, 9 is higher priority then 10, so you have to step back and allow them to bud in front of you in that line. Once you get to the front of this line and are standing in the square box, no-one can bud in front of you because you are next up to pitch that contact.

I made my way around that room working my priority list, hitting contact after contact with this pitch: "She was a widow at 37 with 4 children but always had room for someone who came across her path or her children's path. Her spare bedroom was rarely empty. At my mother's memorial service in 2011 our family was approached by individuals who did stay in that spare bedroom. Their gratitude was overwhelming. We decided to make a list of everyone we could remember who took that spare bedroom in the 1970's, 80's and into the 90's. Our list totalled eighteen. It took, my sister Julie and I three years but thru word of mouth and social media we found and interviewed all of them on how their time in our house and relationship with our mother impacted their life. The message in this story reminds us of something we are born with and most everyone has forgotten. We have an inherit want, need and desire to connect and help one another. In so doing we find our own true joy and fulfillment" The book will be titled Love, Care and Share".

This summit gets you real feedback and you get it quickly. In the middle of your pitch you may be interrupted with a "This is just not for me. Next!" or "Not interested" or "Not at all a fit here". However, I did get the full pitch out many times and got a "Sounds like a great story", "I like it, keep me posted", "Here is my card and let me know when it's published", "I can book you right now on a radio show. Step over to my assistant and they will take your information".

"One lady in particular said "Sweetie, this sounds like a great story. When you finish the book, please send me a copy. Here is my card."

This woman was Bonnie Kogos, an author and newspaper columnist, writing for The Sudbury Star in Northern Ontario for over thirty years. She is a firecracker, who loves to help authors.

Her nickname is the “Energizer Bonnie”.

In aggregate, the support for this story was obvious and the experience filled my motivation tank to the top.

At the end of the last day during this Summit I signed up for something called Quantum Leap. It is the next step forward that Bradley Communications Group offers.

3 - Quantum Leap

The Quantum Leap commitment is just that. It is a leap of faith which moved me towards the dream. This is another investment in commitment level and in money to find out if the the dream was more possible. It is a monthly fee to have access to all the professionals I needed counsel from to get things done. I needed marketing knowledge of the publishing industry. I needed help with the book marketing messages. I needed website content input. I needed tighter editing. I needed to think about all these things while I was finishing the writing. They all relate to the writing content and messaging.

These decision moments that made me put money down, that is what made it more real for me. Every penny I spent on this journey is money I invest in myself. It is money to find the help to make it happen. It is money to get to and spend time the right people. Having said that it was a challenge at times to sign the cheque. I realized one thing for sure, that if I did not sign and send the cheque; I might not ever know if the dream could happen.

Steve Harrison is owner of Bradley Group Communications. He has helped people like Rich Dad, Poor Dad co-authors Robert Kiyosaki and Sharon Lechter. Their book has sold 32 million copies. Steve helped Jack Canfield, author Chicken Soup for the soul. It was in the beginning when Jack had 3000 copies of his book in his garage and needed help to sell them. That “Chicken Soup” series of books has now sold over 500 million copies world wide. More sales means more people get exposure to the message and this is what I was working towards. Finding how to get my Mom’s message to as many people as possible.

Part of the Quantum Leap encounter is a series of group marketing get togethers with Steve. Multiple Quantum Leap members attend the “think-tank” get togethers. They are held in a very nice hotel backing onto a golf course close to their main office in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These round table meetings are for up to eight Quantum Leapers; First time authors, business owners, inventors. People like myself perusing a dream. I took my son with me to the first one. I wanted him witness this caliber of people and share in the experience. We met a local lady from Philadelphia who has a horse farm where she offers workshops. The workshops connect people and horses for some extraordinary results. In one case a lady realized for the first time that she has always had a fear of men.

A lawyer from Little Rock, Arkansa had just published a book about an ancient poem that has always moved him. He breaks down every line to divulge its true meaning. We met a middle aged actress from New York who was reinventing her career with a come-back. Another participant was a gentleman who has hosted numerous TedX talks.

The way this works is we go around the room with standard marketing messages to see if they are a fit with your own story. You respond or you can brain storm alone or with others on derivatives of that standard marketing message. So it is highly interactive as a group. This process also helped with establishing who these marketing messages can be directed to and how to get to those contacts. (Example how does a new book author of a memoir pursue the USA library community to promote their book and which marketing messages will work best for this target market?).

At the end of the weekend you make a verbal declaration then move around the room re-introducing ourself to other participants with that title. Mine was “Hi I am Tom Herstad Author of a Best Selling Book and Public Speaker.

Reigan's declaration choice was that he was a movie producer. I enjoyed watching him respond to that question, finding his answer, then witnessing his declaration.

Once the weekend was over and we said our good byes to the group, Reigan and I decided to make another night of it. He and I went out to dinner. Just the two of us. During the dinner we got into a discussion about his early childhood. He got emotional telling me that he was hurt by the way I dealt with a specific event. I asked him to tell me. He went on to express how ashamed I made him feel as a result of him exposing himself to a little girl when he was five. Revisiting this event together I realized I would change the way I dealt with it. I apologized to him for not knowing better. I asked him if I could respond now to what I said to him back then. I continued by saying "I should have told you that it is natural to be curious. That it is not bad to do that. It is just not appropriate. I asked him to forgive me for making him feel ashamed of himself and his own sexuality at that very young age. We got thru this difficult conversation then went back to the hotel to sit on the patio out back before bedtime.

Sometimes going away together, to a new place, away from life's daily routine, can allow us the chance to find those topics we need to discuss. Coming back home thru the Pennsylvania and New York State Adirondack Mountains was a peaceful, beautiful, spectacular drive we enjoyed. We even saw a couple bald eagles.

4 - Laura P

It was late spring in 2016, my son and I, were finishing a lighting service call in the western suburbs of Toronto on the shores of Lake Ontario. This customer has been with us for many years, as a result we have a close relationship. Once we gathered up our tools and loaded the truck I made my way to the front door to deliver the service call worksheet and get paid. Reigan, waited in the truck for me as I rang the bell. After a long pause Laura opened the door, came out with her cheque book. It was easy to see she was upset as she made her way to the open porch front chair. She sat down and asked me for the sales sheet. I handed it to her. She confirmed the amount verbally as she started writing the cheque. About half way thru writing Laura stopped, slumped over forward, hugged her chest with the cheque book. I said "Laura, are you ok?". She said "No. I just don't fit in here". "What is wrong?" I asked. She went on to describe in detail how she had attended her daughter's high school pre-graduation assembly that morning. Side bar here; This is a rich neighbourhood littered with mansions and Porsche cars. almost all women are stay at home wives with the most recent designer clothing. Laura went on to express how while at this function she shared with some of the other moms, in attendance, that she was had a couple of kids staying with her in the home. One is her daughters best girl friend who is struggling with a cocaine addiction. The other is a friend of her son's. This boy was thrown out of his family house because he expressed to his parents that he wanted to attend a different university rather than the one they had chosen for him. When Laura finished sharing this with the women they responded by cautioning her on helping "those" kinds of kids. They went on to suggest Laura is being taken advantage of and being used. Laura held back the tears and finished writing the cheque. As she handed the cheque to me I said "Laura, you are doing what we are supposed to do. We are supposed to react to others who need help in this way. You're not being weak or being used. You remind me of my mother. I am writing a book about her life right now. Could I send you the draft? Can you help me know that this is a story worth telling, sharing? Laura replied by saying "Yes, please send it to me". Later that night I emailed her the rough draft.

A couple days later I got a phone call from Laura. She spoke in a very soft voice "I cried thru the entire read. I needed to read this Tom. It has legitimized my life and what I do. I now have a relationship with your mother and I know that I do not have to justify what I do to anyone, anymore. Thank you, Thank you. Your mother sent you here that day. I needed this"

5 - Cuba

Laura's response filled my motivation tank again but I still found myself "flat-lining". This is a word I use that refers to my writing process. This is when the writing doesn't come naturally and then I start to wonder why and or push it until I realize it has to come on it's own. During these times I recall how Jules would coach me on. She would say

"Keep going Tom. There is something here for you to find out". I remember my reaction to her words. She offered me reassurance, support I realized I desperately needed during these spells of time. Part of my response to this "flat-lining" included moving a bed up into that loft at the top of the house, where the stories were pinned on four walls. I figured if I could sleep with all the stories around me that might help. Then something happened.

My mother used to say "You have all your own answers. Relax and get quiet, listen to your inner voice." Something inside of me was telling me "You have to go away. Somewhere remote, sit on a beach, stare at the stars. You have to make a decision to finish something you don't know how to do. You also have to contemplate how to get a book edited and published". I scheduled a vacation to Cayo Coca, Cuba and asked my sister to join me. The trip it was my treat. Julie is great fun and she can also weigh in with deep thinking on any subject matter.

We arrived at Toronto Pearson airport that February Monday morning at 8 a.m. in 2016. I found my isle seat and was happy to notice I was seated beside a quiet husband and wife couple. I rested and read my book, "Autobiography of a Yogi" by Yoganunda. This is the man who introduced Yoga to North America in the early 1900's. I was inspired to read this book after reading Steve Jobs book. He carried this book with him all the time and made arrangements to be sure that everyone who attended his memorial service received a copy of this book as a posthumous gift from Steve. I also became aware that George Harrison of the Beatles said the book was the most important book he ever read and used to hand them out to his friends.

Half way into the flight I looked up from my book and connected with the lady beside me. Tanya introduced herself and her husband Austin. Tanya went on to discuss her interior design business, I shared with her my lighting experience. Austin weighed in with his life coaching counselling. It was a great engaging chat, then Tanya asked me this question "What else do you do?" I said, I have started writing a book about my mother's life. She said "I am a Best Selling Author, an editor and someone that has experience in self publishing". I said "What!?" For the balance of the flight we went on to have an amazing chat about writing. When the plane landed, as usual, people flooded the isle and pour out of the plane, into the airport. We got separated and forgot to exchange business cards. Off they went and off Julianne and I went.

The resort was right on the ocean and perfect. I swam with dolphins, rode a scooter around the peninsula at sunrise. Sandy beach as far as the eye can see in both directions. The water is knee deep at least one hundred yards out. The water front is littered with wind surfers. They were fascinating to watch.

A week later Julianne and I made our way to the airport for the return flight home. I sat in the airport waiting area, here came Tanya walking towards me. She asked "What flight are you on?" I said my flight number. She said "Us too". Tanya then said "What seat are you in?" I said "Not sure". We exchanged business cards and promised to keep in touch. Thirty minutes later I boarded the plane and made my way down the centre isle. Wouldn't you know it? I was seated directly beside Tanya again!

The conversation ramped up. Tanya wanted to know everything. Why was I writing the book? She wanted to hear more stories about my mother. Was I committed to finishing? As a result of this discussion Tanya agreed to receive the draft and give me her professional opinion on whether this is a story to be published for our family or if it had a bigger purpose. As we were exiting the plane the question about birthdays came up. Tanya's birthday is May 14th.

"Are you kidding?" I asked. That is the same day of my mothers birthday.

I emailed her the draft as soon as I got home from the airport. Sixteen days later Tanya called me. It was a Thursday evening at 9:30pm. She said "Tom, you and I are going to do something wonderful together. This is a big story that needs to be told" and shared with the world."

6 - Keep Writing

Tanya's response to the initial draft allowed me to fill my motivation tank and keep going. I opened the wooden door to the loft, grabbed the hand railing on both sides of the stairs and returned back up into the top of our home

to continue writing. But now I had additional inspiration, a 1960 Remington type writer. One of my closest friends and his wonderful girl friend offered it to me as a gift when they heard I was writing a book. As it turns out Lori's father had just passed away and they had to deal with the contents of the house he was living in. Her father, Kerry Lambie, was a news paper column writer for thirty some years. He climbed the ranks to considerable heights in the print media industry. I welcomed his, silver, work of art, piece of machinery into my writing space, placed in the middle of the room on a fold out table. When I shared with John and Lori my intent to include their gift in this writing I asked if they could offer me more detail on Lori's father. This was their response:

Kerry was born in Kirkland Lake, Ontario. He started his lengthy career in newspapers as a sports reporter at the Northern Daily News in the community. Stops would be made at several other newspapers as he eventually climbed the ranks to executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer (North America) of Thomson Newspapers Corp. A long-time passion of Kerry's was painting and after being sidetracked by the newspaper business for thirty five years, he retired and started his own studio, largely focusing on landscapes from Ontario's Northland. While the newspaper business had brought Kerry to the Toronto area, his heart had remained firmly tied to the North. He visited the Temagami area annually and called the region "almost never pretty but always beautiful." He painted at his Mississauga-based art studio for 20 years and his work is hanging in homes and businesses in Canada and other countries, including the U.S. and Australia. Kerry passed on June 6th, 2018. The presence of Kerry's typewriter will continue to remind me that I am not alone in that loft, writing in the middle of the night. RIP Kerry.

The stories kept coming but now not just half way thru the night, they were now coming to me during the day as well. I started meeting with Tanya twice a week to review the writing, engage in coaching, out loud editing. She was firm but kind with her enthusiastic guidance. She questioned me on many aspect of each story and asked for more detail in places or offered a change in paragraph order. I was hungry for her feedback and soaked it all in. It was during this faze of the project that she said something to me that I had to contemplate. She said "Your story telling is very good but you need to go deeper. You need to take the reader into your thoughts and help them trust you, get to know you. This allows them to believe your perspective. I also want you to realize that putting your heart on the page means you need to take complete ownership of this writing. You need to put your name on this book." I did not ever think about the book cover or any of this until Tanya's words. My sister and I started this project together completing interviews. Julie transcribed the audio interviews to print. We collaborated on the content of the book often together. As a result of Tanya's statement I knew I needed to call my sister. After catching up with her, I said "Julie, I realized that I need to ask you a question. Are you ok with me putting my name on this book?" I shared with Julie what Tanya said to me. I was expecting a longer pause. But Julie said "Yes, I am ok with that, go ahead".

It was during this time that I also picked out some of my mothers closest friends and sent them some stories to get their feedback. I believed that their replies to me would in some way be close to what my mom might say to me. I also knew they would have fresh eyes on this writing so perhaps offer something I did not see or think about. You know the saying "too close to the forest to see the trees"? Well, they did. One of her dearest friends said I was rushing thru on some of the detail. Another said you have to give the reader a physical description of your mother early in the book. "The reader needs to be able to see her". Then I heard this during a phone conversation with her closest friend Chris, "Tommy, you need humour in this book. Your mother loved to laugh".

7 - Where's my Laptop?:

Jules and I went away for a weekend trip with the trailer. Upon returning to the house I became aware that my 22 year old son had hosted a party the night before. While the house was cleaned, something happened that could have drastically affected the Love, Care and Share first Edition book ever being completed.

My lap top was missing from my office. During the impromptu party one of the "invitees" stole it.

This laptop had my book manuscript and all the interviews for the book on it. Everything I'd been doing for the past four years on this project. It also contained my lighting business information for the past eleven years. I was

livid, freaking out. I grilled Reigan endlessly as to who might this disgusting thief be. Scared himself, he started connecting with his friends who attended the party. He narrowed it down to a girl he went to high school with.

Could she have taken it?

We drove to her house and confronted her. After much questioning she identified a guy who came with her to the party. She recalled watching him during the party leave the back door running to his car with something under his arm. Unfortunately, the guy was someone this girl had not seen in quite a while. He was passing thru the area and was now gone again. She gave us his cell phone. But it was disconnected.

Exhausted, I met with local police and filed a report, but they promised nothing. Expressing that the computer black market is a quick moving machine. They said that the computer within twenty four hours is memory deleted and sold as an "out of the box" back into the sellers market. The buyers think these products are returned computers from a first time purchaser. I was desolate. More searching in my office for written notes turned up little evidence that a book was even in the works. I was desolate.

Once I settled down I began to think how I might be able to retrieve the book transcript and my business information. Then something occurred to me, I had sent the updated book manuscript with editing notes back to Tanya via e-mail four days before leaving on that weekend trip. With bated breath, I dialled her number. Tanya confirmed that the manuscript was on her computer, in her possession, I could breath again.

I then called my book keeper to confirm that the business information did have a backup with her. Deep breathing, again. How lucky was I?

I connected with my insurance agent to discuss the replacement of the computer under our house content insurance. Rob filed the necessary paper work for the insurance claim, the computer would be replaced. During my meeting with him he asked what was on the computer. I expressed that I was writing a book about my mother's life . He asked about the book. I described the interview process we went thru and shared a couple of the stories from the book with him. I express to him that when I was making a decision to finish this book I heard a Commencement speech Jim Carrey completed at MUM University in 2014. Hearing Jim's speech had a huge impact on me.

"The affect you have on others is the most valuable currency there is" Jim's statement during that speech triggered a realization inside me; My mothers positive affect on other people had to be acknowledged and shared with the world. My mom was doing what Jim said is so very important and I agreed with him.

Rob said "I am best friends with Jim Carrey's brother, John". Rob went on to discuss his relationship with him and how they met in the car racing circuit. I asked Rob if I could connect with John. I wanted to see if I could send him a copy of the book so he might forward it on to Jim. I wanted to acknowledge Jim for helping me make the completion decision for the book. Again, hearing his speech was the defining moment when I decided to finish the writing of the book. Rob agreed to connect me with John and his wife. After we connected, John agreed to forward the book to Jim with my hand written thank you note and signature. I included another copy for John and his wife in the package I mailed. I was so pleased that I was able to thank Jim for helping me make that completion commitment. I did not heard from Jim. But I do trust that he received my book.

What did I learned from this?

Sometimes a positive outcome can happen thru a harrowing incident.

8 - First Edition Finished:

It was another Sunday drive with my sister. I picked up Julie from her cottage style home in Belfountain. She wanted to show me a new spot. It is an old mill that has been converted into a shared space art gallery in the little

village of Alton, Ontario. We pulled into the property after driving over a small bridge. The three story white stone building is situated on a big pond with a large creek water fall that runs directly beside the mill. I could hear the sound of rushing water as I stepped down from my truck.

We made our way inside the building, Julie said "Let's go see if Paul Morin is here today". I nodded and followed her up the main stairs and thru a meandering, creaking, wooden floor hallway; Paul is the artist with the largest room in this shared art gallery building. We were in luck, his gallery door was open. Classical music was playing and I could smell a hint of something burning. Paul introduces himself to Julie and I, then expresses that the smoke smell is the sap of pine trees far up in the Andes mountains in the Chile area of South America. It is said that the smoke can inspire creativity, open the mind.

He continues the discussion and walks us towards the art work that covers all four walls. Paul describes his art as a high end car salesman might describe a luxury vehicle. It is a dialogue that marries a description of what we are looking at with his artistic process and how it might make us feel to look at it. He is a true artist in every sense of the word. When he speaks you just want to stay quiet and hear more. He continued by describing how the layering of colour works. I continued looking at his paintings as well as at the lighting that is illuminating each piece of art. Paul noticed I had a couple detailed, long pausing looks at the type of lighting he had and said "The lighting in here is wrong, I wish I could get it right". I replied to his statement by saying "I am a lighting designer. I agree you could have much better lighting on your art."

Paul then shared with us that he has just bought a building two minutes down the street. That he is going to buildout his new art gallery there. He asked me if I could drive over with him to look at the building. Give him some ideas on light the exterior as well as the interior where he will be showcasing his artwork. I agreed to go with Paul, Julie decided to stay behind and visit with other artists.

As we pulled into the parking area directly behind the newly purchased building Paul shared with me it's history. It was originally built as a church in the late 1800's. The building was ultimately used for many other reasons. It later became a fire hall, then during WWII it was used as a warehouse for army uniforms and condoms. After that it was a community hall / dance hall. What a exquisite building for Paul's own art gallery. As we continued walking thru the interior and into the basement Paul listened intently about my lighting ideas and suggestions.

When we had finished the lighting consultation Paul asked "What else do you do other than lighting?"

I said, "I am in the throws of writing a book about my mother's life".

"Who is doing the book cover for you, Tom?" he asked.

I said "I have not thought about that yet".

"I will do the cover for you and you can give me some lighting for the new art gallery?" he replied.

I said "Thank you Paul, that would be great!"

Over the next month, I completed an exterior and interior lighting design that offered many different styles of lighting including colour changing lights for the interior main stage area. I specified very high colour rendering index lighting to illuminate his art pieces as this type of light allows the true colours of the paint to show without distortion. I suggested launching the light close enough from the top of each piece to show the texture of the paint. In return I received an amazing piece of art that was used for the book cover, 1st Edition of Love, Care and Share. The painting resides today in the centre of the wall above our master bedroom bed.

Once all the stories and interviews were organized in the best order, formatted and now that the cover was finalized I self-published with Tanya's company, Creative Hummingbird Results. She also helped with the website

development. The video book trailer was also completed. Love, Care and Share was published in June of 2016 and downloaded to Amazon.

The website is: www.lovecareandsharebook.com

9 - She Knows Him

I emailed Julie the final draft for her to see the finished product. This was an exciting time and I wanted her to see it.

A couple days later I heard from her. It was a weekday after a lighting installation was completed. We had just finished loading the truck, heading home, when my cell phone rang. It was my sister Julie. The phone was connected to my truck speaker system.

I said "Hello there"

She said "Something extraordinary happened today".

I asked "What?"

Julie said "I am half way thru the reading of the book". She paused for a few seconds.

Her pause reached the amount of time for me to maybe say "Are you still there?"

When she said "Tom, I now know my father."

She was seven when our father died. Other than the many stories we all shared with her about dad and her vague memories, she did not really know who the man was. However, reading the book, the family stories, my description of my father and my feelings towards him helped Julie find her own definition of the man. This was an amazing conversation we shared. I was so happy for her and proud of myself for being able to contribute to this realization for my sister.

This was another time when I was more aware of my Mom and could feel her presence in this work. It was as if I could see my Mother looking at me with her gentle smile and subtle nod of approval.

10 - Volume Print

It was time to engage with Stellar Printing for a volume print run of the book. I wanted to engage with in-store book store signings. The way this works is the printing company gives you one copy of the book and you proof read it be sure there are no mistakes. If everything looks good, you "pull the trigger" on the volume run. In this case it was 150 copies of the book.

I drove the one hour to pickup the Love, Care and Share proof copy at the Stellar Printers. It was a great feeling to now be holding the book in my hand. When I got home, I hooked up my thirty foot trailer to my company pickup truck and made my way down to the Oakville Yacht Club on the shores of Lake Ontario. There is a small park right beside all the big boats. I backed the Airstream into a corner spot with the trailer screen door facing the water. I wanted to read with the lake as my back drop.

About ninety minutes into my read there was a knock at my trailer door. I ear-marked the page, placed the book on the kitchen table. This distraction confirmed that I needed a reading break and I wanted to stretch my legs. When I opened the screen door I noticed a man standing in front of the trailer. Before I could say "Hi", this man said "Oh, I am sorry, you're not Mike. Same silver Airstream trailer, same spot, two weeks ago a guy named Mike was right here. Sorry to bother you". I stepped out of the trailer, down the side stairs and introduced myself with a handshake. He introduced himself as Doug Gill. During our subsequent conversation Doug asked "What are you

doing here?" I expressed that I was proof reading a book that was just published. Doug interrupted me and said "I am an author too, I write Sci-Fi". He continued to describe in detail his most recent transcript. Doug continued to tell me about his hobbies which included writing musical score. He is a piano player. During this conversation I expressed to him that my book is about how our mom lived her life. Doug asked me why I wrote the book. I explained about how we interviewed people regarding their relationship with her. Doug asked me to tell him a couple stories from the book. After sharing the stories, Doug said "This has got to be a movie. I know a movie director. His name is Paul Saltzman. The man is far too busy to get to. Maybe if I can get a copy of your book to his wife Anne, she might read it then give it to Paul? Two weeks later I picked up the volume run of books and met with Doug. I gave him a signed book for himself and I signed one for Anne Peace.

A month later when my Cell phone rang, I did not recognize the number. I answered the phone, as usual, "Tom here". Then I heard "Hi Tom, this is Paul Saltzman of Sunrise Films. My wife handed me your book the other day and I have just completed reading it. It is a great story Tom and I was hoping you could come meet with me at my home in Oakville to have a discussion?" I said "When would you like to meet?" He said "How is next Tuesday" I interrupted him before he finished the sentence with a "Yes, what time?" He said "How is four?". He shared with me his home address. "See you then" I replied.

The following Tuesday I invited Julie down to my house and when four o'clock that afternoon was approaching we made our way to Paul's house on Lakeshore road. His property backs onto Lake Ontario. Julie and I made our way to the front door and could not stop looking at each other and smiling. Paul greeted us at the front door then we made our way to his kitchen table. After Julie and I sat at opposite sides of the table Paul asked us if he could make us a Chia Tea. We agreed and he moved to the stove and placed a pot on the front burner. We exchanged pleasantries then Paul delivered us warm coffee mugs full to the top with his special tea drink, foaming over. He sat with us at the head of the table and said "I know your mother has come here with you today. I loved the book and it represents the following:

1. It's a beautiful story
2. Its a female lead
3. Your mother represents the courage and bravery to love
4. It also represents bright stories in these challenging times.
5. This is a story that needs to be told and shared.

He paused then said "It should be made into a movie." I could not believe my ears. My mind started to race with excitement. Julie and I were grinning at each other. Both our faces went flush red. Then our grins were finished, they morphed into two full blown perm-a-smiles. Paul went on to explain to us about his career and how he has always consciously searches for stories about loving bravely. He then listed all the tv and movies he has participated in. Paul is a two time Emmy winning director. The conversation then continued then Paul said "I am far too busy with other projects to get involved, but if you can find financing for a screen play come back and see me. I will counsel you thru this industry. I can introduce you to my entertainment lawyer". Julie and I looked at each other with a puzzled expression. There was a silent pause, then I said "Paul, how do you find financing?" His reply was "Just put it out there Tom and keep going. There is something special about this story". He walked us to his front door, we left.

Our ride home together was mixed with excitement and reassurance but also confusion about the "finding financing" part.

11 - Movie Contract

Four months after that meeting with Paul Saltzman. My son, Reigan, and I had just finished another lighting service call on Michael and Laura's house. Their family was headed to Jamaica for vacation. I expressed that the book was now published, gave them a copy to read if they had some down time on the beach. They thanked me for the gift and off they went to the airport.

Five days later I got an email from Michael during their vacation. He expressed that they wanted to meet with me when they returned from Jamaica. I went to their home two weeks later. They shared with me that Laura read the book in one sitting and then handed it to Michael. He expressed how emotional the read was for him. Then they said "This is a story that needs to be shared with the world". Michael went on to expressed that he has experience making books into movies with his family business, Princess Gates Entertainment. He suggested that he and his wife finance the movie screen play. I called Julie from the car on the way home and she cried as I told her what had just happened. I expressed that I would set up a meeting with Paul Saltzman and let her know.

Two days later Julie and I went back to Paul's for a second meeting with him. He said "Remember when you were here four months ago and I was too busy on other projects? Well, I just dumped a project two weeks ago and I have time to work on this with you. "I want to sign a book option with you Tom and a want to produce and direct this movie. I also took it upon myself to mail your book to a screen play writer. His name is Tom Schlesinger. He read the book and is interested to join in with us on this project. When can I meet the Paletta's?"

A couple weeks later I took everyone to Buca Di Bacco in Oakville. During the fine dining, Paul, Michael, Laura, Julie and I discussed the book and our mother's affect on others. It was a fantastic get together. There was obvious synergy at this table between all of us, it felt so right. Paul had to leave right after dinner for another meeting and excused himself. At the end of the evening Julie and I walked Michael and Laura to their car. We split up into two and two. Michael and I walked ahead discussing a possible movie contract between Paul, Michael and I. Julie and Laura were walking behind us and had their own conversation. I had already been predisposed to this negotiation, talking at length with Paul the days before. As a result of our "side walk chat" Michael and I came to a percentage share agreement in the parking lot, shook hands on it.

The following morning I called Paul expressing all of the details of the conversation with Michael. Paul said "This is perfect. I will draw up the legal contract with my entertainment lawyer. Great work Tom!". Paul went on to express how impressed he was with Michael and Laura. He continued by saying how this type of project needs the right people to make it magic and he believed we were right on track with that.

The movie contract came a week later. The percentages share was all there but as I read thru it I thought about Julie. She and I started this project together years ago doing interviews. She helped transcribe the interviews to print. I decided I would split my percentage with her 50/50. I emailed Paul on this change and the adjustment was made to the final contract. Another thing happened during this time that is quite unique. The group agreed that Julie would get the chance to write the original screen play being coached by Tom Schlesinger. This was another mind blower. Tom Schlesinger, a seasoned veteran writer agreed to coach Julie on her first screen play. Paul, said "It would be great to get the daughters energy into this movie". We all agreed.

The contract signing meeting was at Paul's. I could smell the Chia Tea as I entered the front door to his house, making my way to that kitchen table. This was the first face to face meeting with Tom Schlesinger. After pleasantries were exchanged and we caught up with each other Paul placed a contract in front each of us. We were asked to sign on the last page and initial the others. Then pass to your right until the all contracts made their way around the table once. All was now official as Julie and I were confirmed as Executive Producer on the movie. The energy was fantastic, we were all smiling and giggling as we signed, initialled and passing to the right. Once this part was finished Paul said "Could we all hold hands? I would like to say a few words". The table was elbow to elbow so holding hands was easy. We all bowed our heads, Paul said "Margie, We are here to collaborate and tell your story. Gives us your words. Give us your truth". With Paul's words this journey went to a whole new level.

We met as a group and had telephone conference calls many times over the next three months. Julie and I were responding to multiple questions about our mothers affect on others. We expressed even more detail about our family life and other stories that were not included in the book; This is the brain storming phase when you put it all out on the table then stand back and pick what definitely needs to be in the movie for sure. Many times during this stage it was expressed that perhaps this should be a mini series or a tv show, there are far too many stories to pare it down to a ninety minute movie. We continued exchanging stories and ideas on the content. Then something wonderful happened. While our group was discussing the view point of the movie it was suggested that Julie write

from her childhood perspective. This was a big swing for her. She was no longer trying to find her way telling the stories I wrote for the book to creating her own story. This was a great moment Julie and I shared at the round table with our group. I said to her "Remember when I called you way back to discuss with you that I needed to put my name on the book? This is when you make the decision to put your name on the screen play and own it as yours" From here forward I backed away from the continued collaboration and the screen play was now Julie's with Tom Schlesinger by her side.

During this intense collaboration the title of the movie presented itself to us. Going into this process it was discussed early that the title of the movie could not be Love, Care and Share. This title lends itself to self-help and a female target audience this all limits demographic reach. The title 2nd Line West was first brought up by Paul Saltzman and Tom Schlesinger. This was interesting as in the initial conversations Julie and I shared about the book she raised this as a possible book title. We all agreed that 2nd Line West is a perfect movie title as it was the road we lived on where the house resided that our mother had changed many lives for the better. It also allowed a marketing hook statement, "Everyone deserves a 2nd chance on 2nd Line West!"

The screen play was finished a year later for the movie 2nd line West. Julie arrived at my home the morning of our meeting day for her to share it with the group. I could see she was anxious. As soon as she arrived we jumped into my ride and headed to Paul's. All were in attendance except for Laura as she had some family stuff to address. Julie and I took our seats at the kitchen table as she handed out her screen play. We read thru the screen play and when it was over both Paul Saltzman and Tom Schlesinger said it was the best screen play they have ever read by someone who has never written one before. Julie's eyes filled up with tears. All the doubt and second guessing she had experienced and all that pressure she put on herself was purged from her being. It was special to watch and witness her reaction to their words. I was proud of her.

Then Paul said "Tom Schlesinger will take the screen play and make some changes, adjustments and polish it." We broke from the meeting.

12 - Bonnie Kogos - 2nd Edition L,C&S

During the screen play collaboration, I got a call from Bonnie Kogos. This was the newspaper columnist lady I mentioned earlier from the Publicity Summit in New York City.

Bonnie said "Sweetie, Where is that book about your Mom? Did you complete it?"

"Yes, I published it and I mailed you out a copy. Did you receive it? She said "No, can you send me another one?"

I mailed out another copy, she read it and we spoke on the phone.

"Tommy," she said, reminding me of my mother. I could feel that Bonnie cared. "The book idea is wonderful, but in certain spots where it is written, please forgive me, as if you are in kindergarten. You need editing help."

"What can I do?" I said.

"Since I believe in you, I am willing to cut the crap out of it, edit it and give it back to you. There is great promise here!"

"Do you want me to pay you?"

"Not at all. This is a gift I wish to give you, and on one condition!"

I paused, Waiting.

"When I send you the new edited copy, to make it run like the wind, will you promise to print it exactly as it is edited?"

"You Bet!" I said.

For the next six weeks or so we went back and forth on emails, with stories and changes she made and with her suggestions. I added a few new stories. As she coached me on, I loved how direct she was.

"Axe this! Give me more detail here, what did you feel when that happened? You're writing 'my mom' too much. Let's use her name, 'Margie', ' Bonnie also said "Stop using 'and' so much!" and "just".

Through this process with Auntie Bonnie, I realized that the read was becoming faster. Bonnie's newspaper columnist experience was obvious; I was learning new stuff.

Now that Bonnie was finished, I connected back with Tanya to re-publish and download the 2nd Edition of Love, Care and Share to Amazon but this time with a new tag line. I changed the tag line to "A Message for Us All" from the previous tag line, "An inspirational message". I knew the new tag line was stronger and had more intrigue. Too many books say "Inspirational" which is a word way over used in published book covers. We also updated the www.lovecareandshare.com website with the over 100 book reviews I had received via email.

Shortly after the update to Amazon was completed, Bonnie asked me to come to New York City. She wanted to interview me on the book for her 1,000th newspaper column. What an absolute pleasure it was to spend the day with her walking around Manhattan discussing all the steps that happened to get the book published, as well as all the serendipity along the way that helped it along to the movie contract. I took her to the best seafood restaurant, Docks in Murray Hill for lunch. On the way back to her apartment building we passed through a street sale of rugs and clothing. There was a carpet runner that she eyed for her home. Full of colourful butterflies. This was just right for her. As I paid for it I expressed to Bonnie "This is a gift from my mother to you for helping her son. The butterflies represent mom".

Bonnie laughed and accepted it with pleasure. She'd think of Margie every time she walked that hallway. Accepting this gift, the long runner carpet filled with butterflies and flowers, she smiled. Then said "So many people believe in you, Tommy, and it's been a pleasure to be on your team. Go get 'em!"

Also, later in these pages, you will read how Auntie Bonnie wrote about me and the progress of the book in her column published in The Sudbury Star. It was such a good story about me planning how to get through to Meryl Streep, one evening, when she was in Toronto at the fancy hotel getting a lifetime achievement award.

"Could I pretend to be a waiter, and simply put the book in her lap". Bonnie wrote this like a detective story; could I, indeed, get through all the protection surrounding her? It made a great newspaper column. Even had a photograph of Meryl Streep. "I will keep writing more columns about you, Tommy. Keep going!"

Now that the book was better, I was confident to mail it out. I asked Dawn Yates, one of the ladies who stayed with us in the 1970's, help me to find correct addresses for Oprah, Ellen, Michael Beckwith, Joel Osteen, Heather Reisman I wanted to find a celebrity, someone who will embrace the story. Help find a bigger audience for it to land on. No one replied or responded to the mailings; Ok, that's alright.

This was another time I reminded myself this that was a journey I agreed to take. I must focus on each step and let the destination take care of itself.

"Embrace the wonderful, amazing journey you are on, Tom," I kept saying to myself.

13 - Never Too Late

The second Edition of Love, Care and Share was published in 2017. When I got the first volume run I had an idea to solve something that was unfinished business in my life since 1987.

I attended Rochester Institute of Technology from 1983 - 1987. My major was Marketing with a minor in Human Communication. I finished the four years at this wonderful institution but was one credit short of my BSc and it was an English course. Yep, a first year English course I kept putting off because of my dislike of English courses. It was always my worst subject in school. To add insult to injury when I did not get into that English 101 class to begin my last tri-mester at RIT, because the class was full, my education counsellor got me permission to write a 1500 word essay. If I received a 75% or better they would give me the English credit in full. Professor Ventura marked it with a 72% and did not budge from this mark after my two failed attempts to meet with him. So, coming home, driving west on the New York state I-90 for the last time, I was one credit shy of the Bachelor of Science, "Grand Sha-lada".

I wrapped and package a copy of the newly published 2nd edition, carefully addressed and mailed it to the VP of Alumni affairs at RIT. Lisa Cauda called me when she received the book, we had a long conversation. She assured me that something might be possible here on the first year English course. Two weeks later Lisa called me and said I would like you to come down to Rochester and meet with me. Three days later I sat in her beautiful, spacious office, on the sixth floor over looking the Union Hall. Lisa presented me with my Bachelor of Science, Marketing Diploma and an RIT Alumni flag. I was legit now as a fully qualified Alumni.

During this trip to my alma mater I met with John Moore, the facilities manager. After a lengthy discussion on the old ice skating arena I played in needing a lighting upgrade to LED I got a purchase order to supply state of the art LED lighting for Frank Ritter arena. Another meeting I completed was with Kelly Redder in the Alumni office. Kelly was in charge of a new construction build on campus. The meeting with Kelly confirmed me throwing my hat into the ring to supply a new custom lighting design and LED lighting products as a donation towards the new Alumni building, that was in its design stage.

Once home, I tucked my new BSc Diploma under my arm and went to a local picture framing store. The Diploma and hand size Alumni flag was fit into a wooden frame with glass facing. So, thirty years and four months since leaving RIT the Diploma was now hanging on my bedroom wall. I stood back and looked at the diploma. I experienced a reckoning. That little boy inside me from grade three was now gone; The boy who came home to get a parents signature on a 3 out of 10 math test. That young man who was locked in my subconscious was realized and released.

I guess it is never too late to finish something we have started.

14 - Brenda F/Meryl Streep

In late summer of 2018, Bonnie had just completed her own book "The Boat That Brings You Home". The book took her nine years to complete. It is a memoir about her time living on a sail boat in the Caribbean with her boyfriend for some four years. Auntie Bonnie emailed me advising me that her new book launch was to be held on the island of Manitoulin, five hours north of my home near Toronto. My girl friend Jules and I agreed to go and support Bonnie at her event.

After the long drive we pulled into the little town of Kagawong on the island. The small community centre parking lot was packed, we found a spot and headed into the building. Although Bonnie is an American, she was introduced to the Canadian landscape by a long past boyfriend and fell in love with it. She has been writing for the local to Manitoulin island, Sudbury Star News paper, for over 20 years. This is why she wanted to launch the book here. She is the "Bell of the Ball" in this close knit community, everyone knows "Energizer Bonnie".

As she finished greeting everyone and explaining why her book had to be written she did something that was so wonderfully gracious. She pointed to me and said "While you are all here, go get Tom's book he wrote about his mom. It is being made into a movie". She then pointed at me and said "Tom, go get some copy's from the trunk of

your car". I was so surprised. This was her day, not mine, but she took the time to help my book get exposure to her crowd. I went outside, came back in with 10 copies. People approached me and asked about the book. I signed and sold six or seven copies than something extremely interesting happened.

A lady was looking at me thru the crowd. She looked around seventy years of age. A younger lady was with her. When the small crowd around me decimated the older lady walked towards me, the other lady followed. When they got to me she introduced herself as Brenda. She then asked if she could touch my book. I said "sure", handed her the book. She took it and held it between both hands in the praying position below her chin, closed her eyes and bowed her head over it. After about a three second count and then an opened eye stare at me Brenda said "Meryl Streep". She is the one you need to get to help with this story. Then she asked me who is the skater in the book? This was bazaar. The skater in the book is me with many stories of my hockey career. I was shocked because she never opened the book. She then said "I have to leave now there is too much energy in this room". As Brenda made her way back thru the crowd away from me, the lady Brenda was with leaned in to me and said softly, "I cannot believe Brenda did that. She is not a physic for hire. She rarely shares her gift with anyone". This lady offered me a gentle smile, then followed Brenda out of the building.

When Jules and I returned from Bonnie's book signing I shared what happened with our movie group during our next conference call. Tom Schlesinger said "Meryl Streep will be in Toronto in a few weeks to accept a Lifetime achievement award at TIFF"; This movie festival happens in Toronto every fall. "Maybe you should go down to the festival?". After the call I sat in my dining room chair wondering how do I get to Ms. Streep in such a crowd of TIFF fans? and if I did, what might happen?

I did go down to the Royal York Hotel that night. I had a leather folder with my book inside it signed for Meryl Streep. I positioned myself at the east end of the building as this is where the big black Escalades line up to pick up the movie people after the show. When she exited the building she got directly into her ride and off she went. These events are tightly guarded and it is hit or miss.

The next day I read in a news release that the movie "Laundromat" was being premiered at TIFF that afternoon at Elgin Theatre. I thought to myself 'Meryl is lead character in the film. She is probably still in town, surely she will be at the movie showing as actors, director and producers generally take the stage and answer questions right after the movie from the attending audience'. I went on the internet and got tickets to the movie. Jules and I arrived at the Elgin Theatre and took our seats. It was a last minute purchase so we could not sit together. I waved to her across the room before the lights went out to start the show. I had with me the leather folder with my book in it. After the movie showing I was going to raise my hand to ask Meryl this question. "Hi Meryl. May I give you a copy of a book I wrote about my mother? I have signed it for you".

After the movie concluded, the lights came on and the curtain parted at the right side of the stage as a young man delivered a podium to centre stage. I thought "Ok, this is when I ask her the question", but when? As I grappled with this thought the director of the movie came out, stood behind the podium. I thought "What? Where are the actors? When do they come out?" Steven Sodenburgh announced that all the actors had left Toronto and he would be taking all of the questions. I got Jules attention and motioned for her to meet me at the back of the theatre. We left the Elgin Theatre with me carrying that leather folder with my book in it.

When I got home I thought "Hey, lets google where Meryl Streep lives?" In so doing I was surprised to see an aerial map of her country home near the town of Salisbury, Connecticut. Could it be true? Is this her home? I decide to call the Salisbury postal office the next morning and ask them to confirm the postal code for that street her house is on. I also guessed the address based on the fact that the house is on the north side and is the only house on this short street. The post office confirmed the postal code but then I got into a conversation with the post office lady. I express to her that I am a first time author and how I am mailing a book to Meryl Streep. We share more conversation than I asked Carol if I could mail her a book for her sister, Mary, an avid reader. I also went further to sign and mail a copy for AJ. AJ is the letter carrier who delivers to Meryl's street. A week later I called Carol. She confirms the individual packages arrived for her sister's book as well as AJ's book. So, I was confident that the book for Meryl made its way to their office ready for delivery to Ms. Streep's home by AJ.

Two weeks later, I got the book back in my mail box. Black magic marker blanking out Meryl's address and big black letters expressing "RTS". Yep, return to sender. I mailed another book the next day. The same thing happened again three weeks later. That's ok, right, F- - - !

I realized that this actress's mail is likely being screen. I sat contemplating what do I do next?

15 - Book signings

This journey has involved many new experiences for me as I have shared with you on these pages. One of the most notable is conducting book signings in local Chapters/Indigo book stores. I have also had the opportunity to do a book signing at Barnes and Noble book store on my alma mater campus of Rochester Institute of Technology.

It is a great benefit to authors to have these stores open to scheduling these book signing events. It is setup thru the store managers. They post your book signing date on their websites, advertise it on their social media platforms. A fold out table is setup at or near the front of the store and you stand or sit with your books on display from 10am to around 4pm. It is a great day to engage with people to discuss why the book was written, share some of the stories, connect with the book store customers. I learned that for most all readers the book store experience is sacred. They enter the store and usually peruse New Release section first. Then they make there way thru the store to their favourite genre sections to see if anything new is there. I realized very early in these book signings that you do not approach a book customer when they have a book in their hand. This is very important; They pick up a book and engage in a detailed look at it's book cover, then the back cover, then the introduction part is read if their curiosity continues to motivating them. If you approach them at all you have to wait until they put a book down and are reloading on their next book interest. You also cannot hover around the book customer. Again, this is sacred time for them as they are about to make a purchase on something that will tie up their "my time" for a month to six months or more depending on their reading speed and reading time they can cut out of their days, nights.

My opening if and when I feel comfortable to approach was to ask a question in a soft voice, "Excuse me, What kinds of books interest you?". If they responded with a positive reply and it included true stories, family books, memories, non-fiction, any reply that could fit with my book I would engage in an introduction of myself, then book title, then express that it is a story about how my mother lived her life. I then say "I will be in the store until 4pm if you would like more information". If there was no other question or statement from them I would slowly back away.

I had some exceptional interactions with book buyers. A Hindu man after a long conversation with me, bought the book, took it to the in-store Starbucks, read the first four Chapters. Then wrote this on a small piece of paper and handed it to me as he left the store. It said "Your mother could see a butterfly in the caterpillar". A lady bought the book, went out to her car in the parking lot, read half the book in an hour, then bought me a Thank you greeting card with a pen written, "Thank you for writing this book". It was exciting to get to some people that would be so interested in Mom's story after engaging with me that they bought multiple copies to give to others in their life. During these local book signings I also met up with people from my past school years. People I had not seen in years as they happen-stance into these book stores on my signing dates. Many of them bought the book out of support based on our shared history. This warmed my heart.

16 - "Hurry up and wait"

The making of a movie is a long process. There are so many moving pieces. If you created an algorithm representing a start to finish formula it would probably take up pages and pages. The fact of the matter is that there are roughly 50,000 screen plays registered with the Writer's Guild of America each year. All things being equal, an un-produced screenplay has a .3 percent chance of being made into a feature film by a studio. This industry has a catch phrase for most every stage of this process. It is referred to as "Hurry up and wait". The movie

making process is long and detailed and it teaches you patience. If you cannot find patience your self doubt will devour you. The biggest task in the process for me has been to stop from focussing on the fact that it has not happened yet. When I find myself experiencing these thoughts I make a conscious decision to change my thoughts to what an amazing journey I am on with this group of wonderful people. I also walk thru the forest or by the water. Those doubting thoughts are no challenge for Mother Nature.

Once the screen play was finalized by Tom Schlesinger you have to make a decision on the potential path for distribution. The picture has yet to be produced and shot but the path of distribution has to be consistent with the content of the screen play. Will it be the motion picture path? Will it be the internet streaming companies path; The Netflix and Prime tv's of the world. There are pos and cons for both decisions but perhaps the answer lies in aggregate distribution. With the internet streaming companies, the first night a movie goes live on these platforms it can access up to 1.4 billion homes worldwide immediately. As a rule there is less money in this choice for the movie production team percentage share but imagine if every home clicked on our movie that first night?

The motion picture choice puts the movie in the water with movie industry "sharks". There is big money in the machine of Hollywood. A tight group that control it and relationships are everything. The big companies also have huge advertising and marketing money to support their films. It is referred to as "The Turtle Path" for a small independent film such as ours to "swim it that water".

What is the "Turtle Path"?; A female turtle climbs up onto the shore of the ocean. It is a full moon night. She makes her way up onto the sand dunes. She digs down as far as she can with her massive front flippers and lays on average, 120 eggs. Mother turtle then covers the eggs and leaves forever. We are one of those eggs! in about thirty days and on the next full moon, we have to crack our shell and claw our way up to the surface of the sand. We then have to crawl past feeding birds as we make our way toward the light of the full moon and hopefully into the water. If we get to the ocean shore, we must swim quickly past all types of feeding fish. If we get to the deep water we may grow to be an adult turtle. But guess what? There is only one adult turtle photographed for the cover of National Geographic and we have to be that turtle. "Say Cheese!"

All in all, this movie making industry is a fascinating one. Julie and I being included in the project is very rare. Most movie people would consider us dead wood that might delay the flow. Most movie producers would buy the story for as little as possible and take it from there as you are instructed to skip down the street counting your pennies. We have the amazing privileged to be with a special group of people who believe we are an asset to the movies message being delivered to the screen. It has been expressed to us that the right story, with the right people, delivered at the right time, can be magic. Remember the movie Good Will Hunting with Matt Damon and Ben Affleck? That is what we are doing. Our message is an example of the bravery to love without judgement, the conscious awareness of others around us, our forgotten desire, want and actual need to connect and help one another in order to find our own true joy and fulfillment. Is that not what everyone wants?

Something happened along this part of the process that affected Julie's initial screen play development. Many changes were made, so many, that she was no longer getting Screen Play credit on the film. When I became aware of this I contact both Tom Schlesinger and Paul Saltzman to find out why this happened. Paul expressed to me that Tom Schlesinger had done so much work on the screen play since the first draft that in his professional opinion the screen play credit lies solely with Tom Schlesinger now. I asked Paul if anything can be done to address all the work Julie had done to get us started on this path. Paul and Tom discussed it and got back to me confirming that they both agreed to give Julie sole Story Credit for the film 2nd Line West. The following day Julie received an email from Paul Saltzman stating that she has Story Credit for the film.

I never told Julie that I had lobbied on her behalf to get this done. Three months later, after a visit with her at a horse farm near her home, as she walked me out she asked me, "Did you contact Paul and Tom to get me Story Credit on the movie?". I said "Yes, I did, because you deserve that". She said "Thank you Tom".

The movie is now in the casting stage, then we will confirm production budget and shoot the movie.

17 - 2nd Line West book Published

In December of 2020 I realized something had to be done. I perused the Amazon sales for the book Love, Care and Share to confirm that only 22 books had been sold in the past year. The book was at a stand still and something had to change. The reality of selling books on Amazon is that you are competing with 48.5 million books. Yes, I said almost 50 million books!

As I thought hard and heavy I stood back and asked myself this question. Does this book have a competitive advantage over other books?

I came up with this:

“First time author signs a movie deal with two time Emmy award winning director”.

“The book is being made into a movie as a result of a movie director’s wife reading the book.”

“A son writes a book about his mom. His sister writes the original screen play for the movie, 2nd Line West”

With this idea I thought about how a movie goer and a book buyer can find each other best. The answer is that the movie and the book should be of the same title. This is an idea I shared with the movie group. This allows both audiences to find the other product easier. It allows for co-branding which speaks to a competitive advantage over the Amazon book competition. This idea also included, if executed the right way, with the right publisher could lend itself to a Best Seller which could help the movie’s production budget getting financed. (i.e. easier decision to invest in a movie based on a “Best Seller” book. Yes?)

I was contemplating when to pull the trigger on this decision. Thinking I must wait until the movie is in production to republish with the movie title 2nd Line West. Until then the movie is still just an idea that has not happened yet. Then this occurred to me. What can I do to help this process in a positive way? What energy can I put into this project to help it along? Then this dawned on me and stay with me; By me pulling the trigger on a 3rd Edition of Love, Care and Share with the movie title 2nd Line West I will be putting this energy out there. By doing this I am conducting myself as thou the movie production has already happened. That positive energy is being put out into the universe. It will also start a 2nd Line West community following with every book sale and this lends itself to the movie audience starting to build. I could also hand out the book to my lighting customers as a gift upon completing their installation. This will lend itself to awareness for the movie 2nd line West before it is completed.

I became aware of Hasmark Publishing during a book signing event in Milton, Ontario. I met another author who knows Judy O’Brien very well. Judy owns Hasmark Publishing. After a face to face meeting with Judy in her backyard I decided on Hasmark Publications to help me with this. They have a proven track record helping self published authors achieve best seller status. Her company name broken down into its parts is - Heart and Soul Marketing. They were the perfect choice.

The republishing took place and all associated work over a next five month period. I added some more stories. The book was reformatted. I had to redo the book’s introduction to predispose the reader why the title was now 2nd Line West. I had to do a new book cover. It was at this time I decided to make “Love, Care and Share” the tagline for the book.

After receiving the final changes on the selected book cover something entirely new occurred to me. The title now being 2nd Line West cannot be associated with a “self help” title or a “for females only” target market. I remembered that these were comments shared with me at past book signings by book buyers. It was also clear to me that 2nd Line West has more intrigue in it. Maybe someone hearing or reading the title would think to themselves “I wonder what happened there for it to be the title?” I also realized that “Based on a True Story” had to be printed on the book cover.

Included with this newly published book was Augmented Reality. What is A/R? The reader downloads a free app. This app. allows the reader to scan a picture from the book, which down loads a pre-recorded video to their

phone. I decided on two locations for the A/R. The first placement is the book cover. When scanned a two minute video book trailer predisposes the reader to the books story. The second A/R is located at the end of the book on the Author page. When my photo is scanned a two minute video plays of me sitting at my table in the loft of my house, my writing space. I speak directly to the reader thanking them for their support of the story as well as giving them some details on how the book to movie contract happened.

The book 2nd Line West was launched on my mom's birthday, May 14th, 2021. Our Margie would have been eighty three. I completed several live Facebook videos with the Hasmark Publishing's community network that day. The first video was done from the little village of Meadowvale on Derry road under that 2nd Line West street sign. Our house used to be one mile north from that intersection. All the roads are changed now and rerouted around this area as a new highway now comes straight thru one hundred yards south of our old property. The other live videos I conducted were from the newly named road in front of that old homestead of ours. The house has been removed but the two acre property remains as it is. On this sunny Friday afternoon with the help of the buying savvy of the Hasmark Publishing group the book did achieved "International Best Seller" status on Amazon.

2nd Line West book website: www.tomherstadofficial.com

18 - Finally

When I think about this entire journey, all the steps which commenced from our mother's memorial service to where we are today, I have so many wonderful thoughts. I believe my mother is helping this message happen to the world from the "other side". I call on her often to find my patience and understanding. I know she is saying "Tom, gently, it will happen".

19 - What I have learned on this journey

I will not share with you any advice because I do not regard myself as a teacher of any of the steps along this path. However, I can share with you what I found out about myself while following this dream:

1. I had to believe that my dream could come true and this started with a declaration to myself. I said to my sister the first time we discussed this story that it could be a book and a movie. This happened in August 2011.
2. I had to write down my declaration as an intention, this happened on my mother's Facebook page in September of 2011. It remains there.
3. I became more aware of my energy. I had to protect it and avoid conversations where people talk negatively about others.
4. I created a Vision Board and continue to update it along the way with every note to myself, business cards, pictures of people, news paper clippings etc. anything that feels inspiring or "right" is pinned up.
5. I realized that I had embrace and relax into the journey. The destination will take care of itself.
6. I realized that I had to let go of how the dream comes to fruition.
7. When inspiration is a challenge or self doubt creeps in I go to nature. A walk in the woods or beside water. It is called Mother Nature for a reason.
8. I had to stop myself from focusing on the fact that the dream had not happening yet. I had to understand that the road to the dream was still under construction.

9. I stopped watching tv news as I realized it was negatively affecting me. I now get my news from U-tube or internet when I decide.

10. I know I have to share this story with others as I have just done with you. In so doing my hope is that you my realize that all dreams are possible.

God Bless and Namaste,

Tom Herstad

Namaste,

Tom Herstad

Author

International Best Seller - 2nd Line West

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