

I was born in West Michigan, and I grew up in a small, conservative suburb of Grand Rapids, called Jenison. Large numbers of people from the Netherlands began arriving in West Michigan around 1850, when a group fleeing religious persecution settled a colony in Holland, just west of Grand Rapids. A Dutch Protestant culture founded on Calvinistic values was prominent. We have all heard of the “Protestant Work Ethic”. To me, it was very real, in that the values of hard work, frugality, and discipline were ingrained in me from a very young age.

I remember when I wanted a 10-speed bike. The message from my Dad was clear. “When you have the money to buy it, let me know, and I will take you bring it home.” I soon found myself delivering the daily paper in order to earn the money to buy a bike. Likewise, when I was 15, I realized having a driver’s permit was of no use unless one had a car. Like when I wanted the bike, my Dad’s message was clear, “Once you have the money to buy a car, you can get a car.” I soon found myself washing dishes at a local restaurant to earn the money to buy my first car. And, so my life went. I wanted to go to college. Of course, the expectation was that I would pay for college. I chose a small liberal arts college in Holland, Michigan, called Hope College, a college founded by the Dutch reformed in 1866. As you can imagine, my four years of college did nothing but further instill in me the ethics learned as a child.

In spite of my conservative upbringing, I have always had a bit of an adventurous spirit. Later in life, a colleague once referred to it as having “the itchy ass gene”. That I possessed the gene first became evident when I graduated from college. I was accepted into several graduate schools, but on a whim, I decided I wanted to travel. Of course, just graduating college, I had one problem. I had no money. From a Jewish friend, I learned that I could volunteer on a kibbutz in Israel, and I could work for my room and board. I scrounged up enough money for a plane ticket, and with \$200 in my pocket, I was off to live for a year in Kibbutz Revivim in the Negev in Israel for a year. The labor was manual and agricultural, but it allowed me to travel throughout Israel and Egypt. With little money, I traveled as

inexpensively as possible, often hitch-hiking, and sleeping under the stars. Still, it was the time of my life, and the experience left an indelible impact on my understanding of the world and other cultures.

Upon returning to the U.S., I was broke, and it was time to get a “real” job. Grad school would have to wait. I landed a position with a large pharmaceutical company in Michigan. I worked there four years. As a result of an acquisition and the resulting down-sizing, I then took a position with a commercial refrigeration company, Tyler Refrigeration. That company relocated me to be the finance person at their branch in Portland, Oregon. Within two years of my arrival, Tyler decided to close that branch in Portland. By then, I was in love with the Pacific Northwest, and I made the decision to stay in Portland, rather than relocating back to Michigan. I took a job in the accounting department with Tyler’s largest customer at the time, Fred Meyer, Inc.

I learned a lot while working in the GL department at Fred Meyer. It was time when Fred Meyer was going through a heady period of acquisitions. While I was there, we acquired Smith Food & Drug, Ralph’s, and QFC. It seemed that a new acquisition was announced every few months. Then, in 1997, the tables were turned, and Fred Meyer was acquired by Kroger. Kroger rolled all of Fred Meyer’s production/processing facilities into Kroger Manufacturing. I moved from the GL department to Kroger Manufacturing, becoming the finance support for the dairy operation on Swan Island in Portland. I fell in love with manufacturing finance, and, as a result, I have spent most of my career since in manufacturing finance. While working at Fred Meyer, I also completed work toward my MBA at Portland State University.

Kroger was one of, if not the best organization for which I have had the opportunity to work. However, if I have made one decision in my career, that I have second guessed it was probably in 2006. While my career was advancing at Kroger and was presented with opportunities and increased responsibility, I made the decision to leave Kroger in 2006, as I was lured by the prospect of more

money with another organization. I went to work for Syngenta's NAFTA Vegetable Seeds division, headquartered in Boise, Idaho. In hindsight, things have worked out, but I have often wondered what my career would have looked like had I stayed with Kroger, rather than switched, literally in the prime of my work.

Syngenta's global headquarters is in Basel, Switzerland. While at Syngenta, I had the opportunity to work for two years in Switzerland. I also spent considerable time in the Netherlands, as we had a site in Enkhuizen, a key vegetable production region in Europe. This satisfied my craving for adventure and exploring new cultures. Like my experience in Israel, my time in Europe has had a life-long impact on my understanding of the geo-political environment in Europe and the importance of collaborating with other cultures.

While rewarding, my time at Syngenta resulted in much time away from family, and, in some regards, working more than most would consider healthy. In 2013 I was informed that I would need to relocate to Minneapolis, MN. With familial ties to the Pacific Northwest, my wife and I had a desire to settle in the Northwest. We decided that if something came up that allowed us to stay in Oregon, Washington, or Idaho, we would be delighted. That brings me to the most recent stop on my journey.

I took a position with Clearwater Paper in 2013. Initially, I worked at Clearwater's manufacturing site in Lewiston, Idaho. As a result of hard work, I moved from Senior FP&A Analyst, to FP&A Manager, to my current role as Director of CPD Finance. I am fortunate to find myself at a point in my life where I am living in the region of the country I love, where I am working for a company that rewards hard work, and where there is opportunity to grow and take more responsibility if one excels. The ethic I learned as a child has served me well. My willingness to take risk and accept change, has allowed me to be flexible and adapt as life happened.