

PROLOGUE TO OUR FAMILY LEGACY, Vol. I, farm2FARM

I remember exactly the month, day, year, and hour and minute that the sparks flew and ignited our crazy idea to write a memoir for our grand girls

- Fairbanks, Alaska, Friday, June 17, 2005, 8:40 am.

It had been an eventful 12 months as I approached 65 and looked forward to slowing down for “Our Golden Years.” But it was not to be. The previous June I had decided at the last minute to run as a petition candidate to become a member of the Board of Directors (of 15) of the national American Chemical Society – an all volunteer post (see ACS - www.chemistry.org – now the largest scientific society in the world with over 160,000 members and having restricted assets of over \$1.4 billion.)

My wife Sally had agreed, but predictably still reserved final judgment, and was protective of me and cautious as the petition effort heated up. We were both stunned at the enthusiastic support I received as a chemical patent attorney - from many influential ACS members. In less than six weeks, I had submitted over twice the number of petition signatures needed to be certified to proceed. My biography and statement notice were published in the ACS weekly news magazine and the ballots were mailed in September, followed by the seemingly never-ending seven-week roller coaster ride and nail-biting waiting period. We learned in late November that I had won the ACS election from a group of four candidates by 30 votes out of 450 Council votes cast. Sally even voted for me - this time.

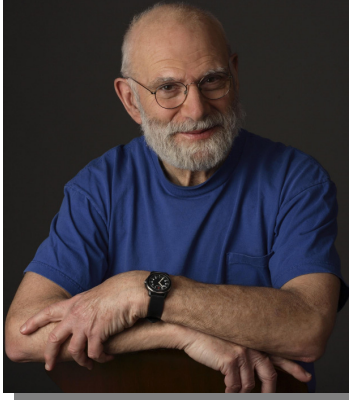
After being invited as a courtesy to observe the ACS Board meeting in December in Washington DC, my politically correct answer to the question: “Well, what do you think?” was, “I appreciate the opportunity to watch the procedures, and the issues and personalities around the table. I am looking forward to being an active and voting member of this group.” My private

comment to others I felt I could trust was, “Growing up on a farm near Penn State was great background for this new position.” And I continued with, “You know, if you love sausage and love the law, never watch either of them being made. Parts of this confidential Board meeting with its executive sessions were making sausage.”

As part of our duties as members of the Board, we are expected to attend a number of ACS regional meetings. The Northwest Regional Meeting (NORM) was held in Fairbanks, Alaska in June. With my usual friendly persuasion, Sally finally agreed to spend her birthday and our anniversary in Alaska. We flew early and visited Denali National Park. Although it has vast vistas, Mount McKinley and the Grand Slam of wild life: moose, caribou, bear and sheep (all of which we saw and photographed), Sally, who is used to the grandeur and variety of Yosemite Valley, was not impressed. She made me promise that my birthday present next year and forever thereafter would be: Never to see Denali National Park again. (She usually makes me sign these promises in blood — mine.)

The ACS regional meeting of about 500 chemists and visitors was held at the Fairbanks Westmont Hotel. We were in for 20-hour days of light, unseasonal heat, humidity, rain, thunderstorms, and power outages. The tone for this location on the frontier was set with the opening lecture by Harry Walker, the colorful author of The Outhouses of Alaska. (He signed my copy of his book simply as, “To all those out-house attorneys.”)

Without question, that Thursday was the high point with an evening lecture at the University of Alaska theater by Dr. Oliver W. Sacks, the author of Awakenings (his observations administering L-dopa to his sleeping sickness patients) and Uncle Tungsten (an excellent memoir of his chemical boyhood). Dr. Sacks was the Artist-in-Residence at the University of Alaska sponsored by British Petroleum and spoke to an overflow crowd of 800.



Dr. Oliver Sacks*

The next morning Dr. Sacks agreed to meet and talk with the chemistry students attending the conference. My daughters, Theresa (the HS biology teacher) and Liz (the biotech-business type), had given me a hardback copy of his Uncle Tungsten. But my recreational reading had been vanishingly small for years. However, earlier in the spring, I had both eyes “fixed” for cataracts and read

the first 150 pages on the flight to Fairbanks. Sacks’ style and prose were so vivid that I could smell the mold in his “secret hiding place” and the cooking odors wafting through his boyhood home.

As I handed my personal copy to Dr. Sacks to autograph, I remarked to him that, “Our backgrounds could not be more different. You had the resources and advantages of a large accomplished medical and scientific Jewish family in London. I came from a farm near Penn State, was the first in my family to finish high school, graduate college, perform my first industrial patentable chemical research at 21, finish my Ph.D. at Stanford in chemistry at 25 and earn my law degree at night at personal expense at Santa Clara U. at 37 while working full time as an explosives expert at SRI International.”

He looked up at me from the title page where he was writing and said evenly, “Then, you must write your memoir.” THE IDEA TOOK HOLD AND WOULD NOT LET GO. And Dr. Sacks did the next month provide great advice and support by kindly responding in writing to my letter of inquiry. In the ensuing months Geof Moore, with whom I had ridden the Cal Train to The City in the 1980s before he became a rich and famous best-selling business author (Crossing the Chasm, Into the Tornado, etc.), weighed in with encouragement.



Dr. Geoffrey Moore*



Dr. Fred Luskin*

Dr. Fred Luskin, the Director of the Stanford Med School Forgiveness Project, ([Forgive for Good](#) & [Stress Free For Good](#)) who had spoken at several of our local continuing legal education meetings on stress reduction, read and commented on portions of the draft.

Life happens and stuff happens. Things get in the way. The winding down of my active patent law practice continues and I am now officially “Of Counsel.” Like many things in life, it means just what you want it to mean. Sally and I talk occasionally of the dreaded ‘R’ word (Retirement). Her position remains that she married me over 40 years ago, “For better or for worse – but not for lunch.” And in the fall of 2006 I was asked and accepted (with Sally’s usual reserved assent) the challenge to be the most visible face for American chemistry and be a candidate for ACS President for 2008-2010. In March 2007, I was one of two nominees to officially advance to be a candidate. By the time you read this, we will know the outcome of that ACS Presidential election.

So you hold the result of over three years of our collecting, writing, checking, editing, discarding and rewriting. You will find in your hands two books. One book in the odd numbered chapters tells of a story that we hope might unfold for our family by the year 2019 - as reportedly written and assembled by our then teenage grand-girls, Kayleigh and Megan. The other book, in the even chapters, is the story of an ordinary guy who got lucky and married up to a charming, resourceful and extraordinary girl – and who together without much instruction and guidance have created an incredibly interesting and full life holding on to important values in the Silicon Valley of California—a land of giga millionaires and nano generosity.

By the time we are age 60, each of us had had the experience and/or have heard about the

trials of others as they have had to sort through and determine the fate of the effects of some close – and continually try to understand why did they keep so much “stuff.”

Why did this particular thing have meaning?

Residing deep with every person is the desire to be understood and appreciated for who they are – and loved for it - especially by those closest. This was our opportunity, perhaps our last opportunity, to explain to the next generations why we kept and held on to some things so dear.

Kayleigh and Megan are now 6 and 4 and will not have the experience to appreciate our stories from the last century for another 15 years. We hope that you enjoy the fiction and the non-fiction here as much as we have enjoyed creating this as a legacy for our grand-girls.



April 2007

By
Kayleigh O. & Megan E. Bhatt
and
Howard & Sally Peters
May 1, 2007

*Permission to use photo and text approved by Dr. Sacks, Dr. Moore and Dr. Luskin.