What am I saying? It was all highlights! Even the one lowlight in Rome when we were nearly mugged! I'd led us down a narrow commercial street to avoid an oncoming crowd. The shops were closed for the night; it was turning dark. Then, halfway down the alley, Patrick sensed that the man tying his shoelaces ahead had been taking a suspiciously long time and might be working in concert with the thug who was suddenly walking behind us.

Patrick's years of police training and experience took over. He told Patricia to continue walking but on the other side of me. Then he made a quick about-face, passing the guy who was trailing us. This threw him off. Patrick started to follow him with one hand inside his jacket as if he had a revolver. He went from hunter to hunted.

Twenty seconds after we safely passed the shoelace guy, so did Patrick and the thug. Only now, instead of speeding up (like any civilian would do), Patrick slowed <u>way</u> down to flout their expectations again. We passed through, and the potentially catastrophic situation was diffused.

Like a brief scene from an Italian spy movie at no extra charge!

Have I mentioned how lucky I've been?

Meanwhile, back in New York, the Fifth Avenue neighborhood where our offices were was also becoming a bit dicey. The city had shuffled many of the homeless into those little hotels which dotted the area. Crime and prostitution followed.

So, when our lease was up in 1988, Elena and I decided to move our showroom to a new industry center which was beginning to coalesce on Bryant Park.

For all those unfamiliar with New York, we went from two blocks from the Empire State Building to three blocks from Times Square. Also nearby, were the Chrysler Building, Grand Central Terminal, and the New York Public Library. The iconic New York City architecture, sought out by every tourist and famous from movies, was our everyday backdrop (which we took all too much for granted).

111 West 40th Street was one of those classic 1950s towers rendered in the International Style.

Springs Mills, Canon Mills, and West Point-Pepperell had already moved up there. The blanket guys and tablecloth guys were following.

I signed a 7-year lease at $100,000 per year with an option to renew every five. By the time I retired, we'd resigned twice. A solid move.

Bryant Park itself was undergoing a massive enhancement to its landscaping, paths, and lighting, and would include new family entertainment, cafes, and a flower market. The plan took four years to complete as it called for the Great Lawn to be excavated so that 84 miles of bookshelves could be catacombed below it – an expansion of the New York Public Library's main branch.

As a lessee of a park-adjacent building a percentage of our rent would help to fund The Bryant Park Restoration Corporation in perpetuity. I enjoyed having access to the meetings where plans and progress were unveiled. All these years later, Bryant Park thrives with summer movies, winter skating and a kids' carousel.

One day – soon after we'd outfitted our new showroom – I was walking to the train station and was stopped by the most gorgeous woman looking for directions to the Port Authority bus depot.

Somehow or other she mentioned that she'd just come from a meeting at Merrill Lynch where she'd started a new job. I asked her if I had done the right thing by buying Prudential Bonds. I was very new to investing. We walked together over to Eighth Avenue, and I wound up inviting her out to Metuchen to speak with Ria and me about our strategy (such as it was).

Even though I was now in the "Who's Who of Finance and Industry," I knew far more about industry. My education had been finance with a small 'f ' – balance sheets, profit and loss, nuts and bolts. Still, I was finding that it provided a very solid base from which to grasp the nuances of investing.

But Ria had always handled our money. She'd grown up, like I had, during the Depression, where the Stock Market was just a place to lose your shirt. Her father, who was a Madison Avenue attorney, liked to have cash, not stocks. He didn't even have a checking account! He had witnessed his parents bringing home the money from their chicken market and putting it in the walls, or maybe the mortgage, or even another person's mortgage, but never ever the market!

So, for all those years, I gave Ria my paycheck and she gave me my allowance.

If a decent salary for most of those years was twelve thousand, I'd been making twenty-five, and now it was suddenly fifty. I can suppose she was putting it in the bank, Certificates of Deposit, or whatever. I really had no idea what she was doing with it. But finally, one day she said, "This is a lot of work. Why don't you do it for a while?"

So just like that, I started taking the paycheck and giving Ria what she needed to make our life and household the way it was.

The gorgeous Merrill Lynch broker started off by asking us about our risk level. Were we conservative investors? I didn't know if we were or weren't at that point, but for some strange reason I said, "Kind of conservative." She sold us some 10-year, zero-coupon bonds. Then some more. Then she was transferred to Chicago. Her manager – insisting that my account belonged to his branch – assigned us a new broker.

I didn't like that. But I didn't know where to go instead. Or what to buy when I got there. Keep in mind, 1989 was a very different time. There was so little information out there. You could mail away for a binder or read the Wall Street Journal but there were no financial cable programs yet. There was just Louis Rukeyser on PBS, Friday nights. I learned to program the VCR!

The other thing to keep in mind about the late '80s was the obscene mortgage rates – double digits. I needed more growth! I cashed in all our bonds and found a broker who would sell me my very first stock, $20,000 of a pharmaceutical called Glaxo. (This is during the period when Hillary was 'fixing healthcare.' Pharma was very much in the news, so...)

(Started in 1904, making dried baby milk.)

Glaxo did well. But the Journal was reporting higher earnings than my broker was. And he kept moving me around from stock to stock to collect his commissions. I got some Phillip Morris and that was doing well too. Then one day he called me to say, "Glaxo could double in value overnight." I took a hundred more shares.

The very next day – my hand to God – his company aggressively recommended a dump of Glaxo. Plainly on my statement I could see that the shares I'd bought were sold to me directly from <u>his</u> brokerage firm. They got out by dumping on me!

He wasn't out for my interests at all. I never called him again. I just walked over to Charles Schwab – zero-dollar trade fees and a selection of mutual funds for the "self-directed investor."

Really it was Patrick Granowski who got me started thinking about mutual funds. That was a new beginning for me. He got me started on Vanguard. I loved how I could look down the columns and see which member-stocks were performing best.

Overall, I credit Patrick for keeping my head in it. We were together a lot during this period. And he would share his insights and information.

He was very focused on retirement. He had a goal and a plan, as did many of his colleagues. As police officers, it was part of their bargain with the city that they would put in their time for the public good and after 25 years retire to a very nice lifestyle. Whereas, in my industry, the plan was to work as hard as one could and then hope for the best.

That year, CNBC launched the first financial news network, and I began taping segments from those shows too. In the evenings, I'd review my tapes, make notes, and familiarize myself with the concepts and lexicon: "mid-cap, expense ratios, maturity distribution" – the shorthand that I'd heard but never put to use.

I started putting our ‘excess’ money into aggressive positions. And our ‘extra’ money into family experiences, both at home and at sea. Here, our very first cruise! This is Bermuda, 1989.

Aunt Tess,
Patrick,
Ria,
Patricia,
me and
Kenny.

And here,
at a family
reunion
in Metuchen,
my sisters,
Mary & Pat,
with
Ria, Patricia,
and
Aunt Tess.

Aunt Tess had moved to Staten Island after Uncle John passed away to be near Patricia. And many (if not most) weekends, I’d bring her out to our house. For Pk and Edward, Aunt Tess was like a grandparent. The only family matriarch they really knew.

Here, Ria and I had traveled out to La Quinta, California to partake in festivities surrounding The Bob Hope Desert Classic.

Officially I was there to see StarCrest. That's what my expense account (mostly) reported. But the VP of Kmart, Lee Blume, and his wife Twila, had invited us to the annual Palm Springs holiday which they and some of Lee's colleagues – including Mary LaRue – took every year.

Twila Blume took this shot of Ria and me. It's one of my favorites of us.

This was lunch at the Marriott in Palm Springs.

Since they were "off duty," I had to be somewhat careful not to be seen as entertaining them. Buyers could get in a lot of trouble if their accounting offices picked up on it. It was an unwritten code of ethics which had to be observed. For instance, I would never pay their golf fees, but I could spring for the odd dinner.

Mary would say, "My God, we don't give them business because we're friends, we're friends because we do business!" She resented the undue scrutiny. I suppose I did too.

Tommy had been known to bristle about my expense account on occasion. I remember one time in Frankfurt, lunch at The Cellar (the city's finest steakhouse) was $1,200 for me, a buyer, and two pillow designers who I'd invited along to add some color. Sometimes you had to lean into what the moment called for!

This kind of thinking was foreign to Tommy. He went ballistic. It was totally understandable. His lunches down in Calhoun were probably $1.99 with a 50-cent tip. I suppose you could fairly describe him as provincial. But that was fine. I didn't need the company or its owners to be "cosmopolitan."

The next day things would calm down and I'd go back to doing what I knew to be right for the company. See, it was after times like those in Frankfurt that a buyer would remember you when they got the go-ahead to run a "one-time promotion" on a new item. That could be a million dollars on a single order and well worth the dinner, drinks, and dancing!

And if you were really lucky, you'd be on their promotion schedule for the next season too. That's just how it worked.

Of course, the other stubborn issue that Tommy and I had was his evergreen hope that I might take a larger interest in the productivity (if not the management) of the other salespeople. After Ben left, and even after Benson arrived, Tommy always felt that I should be contributing to that need as well.

But I never wanted to be a sales manager. And besides, Benson was already demonstrating what an impossible job it was. I had long ago concluded that salespeople were not your employees, they were your customers! You had to keep them happy. And you had to listen to all their stories and unravel their problems. "We sent out three dozen pink instead of the orange to the North Dakota stores and the wrong shade of green to Nebraska."

I didn't want anything to do with that, so I just made myself unavailable to it. Then one day I'm in my office and all of sudden Elena comes in, "Tony's gone! Tommy fired him!"

"What?" I couldn't understand it. Tommy liked Benson a lot.

I mean, I <u>could</u> understand it; I had talked Tommy out of firing Benson once before but, as I said, it was an impossible job. They wanted the old accounts back, but the few that were left weren't worth chasing. Tommy absolutely did not agree with me on this.

Ultimately, I explained to him in a letter – and I paraphrase – "Dear Tommy, I don't want to be a sales manager in the same way that I don't want to be a minister or a dentist or a tugboat operator. To my mind it is as different a function from what I do as any of those other professions." It went on from there. Actually, the letter was quite poetic. I wish I still had a copy.

Fortunately for me, it had become undeniable that my approach was working. The number of our competitors had dropped to six or seven and I was now doing over 12 million dollars per year in sales. I think Georgia's biggest year during that period was something like 20 million. So, I guess I was selling more product than the rest of our 14-person salesforce combined.

You know what? I shouldn't even say "sell." If you asked me, I never sold anything to anybody. What I did was talk about the company and how great they were to do business with. And then I tried my best to embody or personify that ideal to them.

And there, I had plenty of backup from Jim and everybody else who worked so hard at the mill. Buyers wanted to know that their merchandise would arrive on time, that their returns would be credited, and that they wouldn't be cheated along the way. They were going to come to Georgia for the same reason I did, the people!

That Christmas Eve, a FedEx box arrived on my desk in New York City. Inside (with no further explanation) was a very nice holiday bonus check plus a box of new business cards for me. These ones bearing the new title of "President."

I called down to the mill, just as I did every year to wish all a Merry Christmas. On this occasion, Tommy's mother, Willie Brown, was also waiting there to congratulate me. Everyone had wonderful and generous things to say. And I'm sure that in that moment it felt like I had reached some sort of pinnacle in my career. I know it did to Ria, who was only too happy to celebrate for days, weeks even. Her pride was palpable in toast after toast.

Georgia Tufted Taps McNamee

NEW YORK — Ed McNamee has been named president of Georgia Tufted Sales, Inc., the bath rug and tufted bedspread manufacturer. McNamee joined the company in 1980 as vice president of national accounts, and three years later was named executive vice president and manager of the New York office. Prior to joining Georgia Tufted, McNamee was a national merchandise manager for the Eatons Department Store chain in Canada. He is a past board member of the National Bed, Bath & Linen Association.

But while I was happy to accept (and be given) much of the credit for the ongoing survival of the company, both in sales and also operating changes, I regarded the new title as honorary, even if nobody else did.

Georgia Tufted shifts executives

NEW YORK – Georgia Tufted Sales, the sales and marketing organization for the Calhoun, GA-based mill, has announced several key executive changes.

Ed McNamee has been named president of Georgia Tufted Sales, replacing owner Tommy Brown, who has assumed the chairman's role. Additionally, Frank Bruno has joined the company as vice president of sales and national sales manager.

McNamee has been with the company since 1980, when he was appointed vice president of national accounts. In 1980, he was named executive vice president and manager of the New York office. Prior to joining Georgia Tufted Sales, he was national merchandise manager for Eaton's Department Stores, Toronto, with which he was affiliated for 18 years.

Bruno was formerly vice president of sales for CHF/Jakson, the shower curtain company, until that company underwent an executive realignment last December.

Under his supervision, Georgia Tufted will undergo a broadening in its range of products a "notch" at a time, McNamee said. The company has already added new colors to its line and will introduce a number of new items.

The company's current business plan calls for a doubling of sales within four years and a tripling of sales within seven years, he said.

Ed McNamee

(The "news"
was heralded in the Trades
by brief articles such as these.)

After being named President (and with Benson so recently gone) it became more complicated to hold my philosophies about sales management. It seemed like I should have cared but I just didn't sit in on those meetings. I wanted to stay focused on, "What time am I picking up the buyers and where should dinner be?"

We finally replaced Benson with a fellow named Frank Bruno. He'd been recommended to me by a non-industry friend. Still, he gave a terrific interview. He even had a Walmart buyer as a reference who said, "If you hire Frank, make sure you send him down here to see us!" Honestly, that got him the job.

Now, it wasn't me who decided to fire Frank Bruno just a few months later, that was Tommy. ("Ed, you found him; you fire him!") But I certainly knew it needed to happen. It was sad really. Frank couldn't tell the truth if he wanted to.

I ultimately came to believe it was some form of illness, as later other events came to light. I could offer extreme examples for degree and even some troubling statements he made, but really what's the point? He wasn't a cruel person, or evil, or even especially mean. He must have been very ill. What else is there?

Fortunately for me, his cause for dismissal didn't need to rely on things of that nature (nor the newly found knowledge that he'd been fired from his last three jobs). The fact is, Frank never made any sales of his own. And out in the field, nothing had improved. But then how could it?

I didn't sleep at all the night before. We were all worried that he'd jump out a window! Whereas Benson could take it – he just packed up and went home – we didn't know what Frank would do! In the end, it went smoothly enough but I can tell you, it was my least favorite day in the 20 years that I worked for Georgia.

July 6, 1992, was going to be Ria's 60th birthday and I wanted to arrange something very special. I had heard about it also being the 500th anniversary of Columbus "discovering" America and how the QE2 would be part of a grand celebration in the New York City harbor. Following its Fourth of July voyage to Bermuda, it would anchor off Liberty Island for a ringside seat to fireworks and a parade of historic tall ships. Perfect!

Of course, Pk and Edward came too! A concert in the Grand Atrium on July 4th featured composers Marvin Hamlisch and David Amram (whom Pk and Edward befriended). Later that year, Pk invited Amram to give a lecture and concert at Rutgers which the kids produced and promoted.